

The French West Indies.

The sea nowhere surrounds more interesting patches of land than Martinique, the scene of the recent uprising against existing conditions, and its sister French West Indian island, Guadeloupe. These islands possess indescribable scenic beauty, great natural advantages and unusual resources, but visitors to view their picturesque scenes are comparatively few, their advantages are not utilized and their resources are undeveloped. For Martinique and Guadeloupe have stood still for a century. The dominant whites run the government in an indolent but overbearing fashion, and the common people submit with sullenness. Possibly, though not probably, the late disturbance may be the sign of a genuine awakening of the people from their protracted slumbers.

The common people of Martinique and Guadeloupe are mostly negroes and part breeds and a singular race they are, as different from the colored elements in the population of Cuba and Puerto Rico as they are different from the negroes of the States, those of Spanish America. There is a strange and interesting variation, but they are almost commonplace beside their near neighbors in the French West Indies. It seems incredible that two peoples, so much alike in tradition and growing out of the same stock, should have drifted so far apart. From their religion to their cooking, all is mystery with the people of Guadeloupe and Martinique. Nominally Catholics, they are in reality mystics, idolaters. They hate the dominant white race with an intensity not the less pronounced because it is not often manifest.

The French West Indian hasn't much mind but a great deal of imagination which is stimulated by idleness, smoking and rum, and must be fed. He demands a promise of something for nothing; a release from present trouble and protection against anticipated ones. This is the whole scheme of his religious belief. It is for this he offers sacrifices, practices self-denial or participates in fantastic or vulgar ceremony as creed or cult demands. During and prior to the rainy season, he engages the service of a priest to offer up prayers, say mass and burn candles in order that the rain may not create floods, that the thunder may not be loud, that the lightning may be harmless. In deference to some other belief, festivities and dancing are wholly abandoned during the rainy months, but the quantity of rum consumed is limited only by the number of sons each individual happens to possess. When in spite of triumphant marches and masses an earthquake or a hurricane visits the island, the people repeat their ceremonies and thank the good Lord that they were not visited by both simultaneously. If the boats are wrecked on shore or sunk completely out of sight and the majority of the dwellings are unroofed the people only pray and say: 'It was the good Lord's will.' When a stupid negro breaks the ice machine and a sweltering population is dying of thirst and a protest is lodged, the only response is, 'It's the good Lord who broke it.'

The French West Indian superstitions are almost infinite in number. Every animal, insect or bird is of good or evil augury, and every peculiarity of character or action, every mark of individuality has its mystical significance. Death is a very serious thing and the candles and prayers for the dead are as costly and as numerous as purse can bear. A funeral in church with a goodly display of lights at the altar and the tolling of bells means 500 francs. When the body and its followers are allowed simply to enter the church and mass is said without candles, the cost is about 300 francs. For a few francs the poor may stop at the church door, but may not go beyond the entrance.

Their mourning rites are as curious as their church rites. Not only the relatives of the dead but all the friends of the family as well, old women and young children, don sackcloth and sprinkle their heads with ashes. If a mourning woman possesses a pair of earrings as large as plums, she covers them over with a piece of black cloth or velvet, as an indication of her grief, and the sight of the great black appendages strikes the stranger most forcibly.

The only thing that remains normal about the women in periods following bereavement is their pride in their hair. It is the chief delight and its dressing the

chief occupation of the dusky woman of Martinique and Guadeloupe, alike in days of mourning and in days of joy. They may be seen sitting on the pavement for more than an hour at a time engaged in this pleasing duty. They never attempt to dress their own heads but render the service one to another. The hair is first parted in the middle and from the crown across the back of the ears. The side sections, well oiled, are then drawn together in front of the ears. Next the strands are plaited and pinned into a small knot after which a sort of rosette, made of black coolie hair, is pinned over it, and then the triumph of her art, the Madras handkerchief, is adjusted.

The women are not beauties, as a rule, but they are strong and sturdy and their longevity is phenomenal. It is asserted that about one-half of the children born die within the year; but the survivors of both sexes live to ripe old age. The sight of people eighty years of age performing all sorts of work, curing cane, breaking stones or carrying heavy loads along the high road is common everywhere and the records show that women of eighty sometimes become mothers.

On the Isle of Desirade, a short sail from the town of La Pointe-a-Pitre, there is a Leper's Home, where medical attention, comfort and seclusion can be had for the asking. The general physical deformity of the people from leprosy and other diseases is shocking. Of almost every other pair of feet you see, one is in a bandage; swollen ankles are encountered at every turn, and a good pair of eyes in either old or young is so rare as to excite comment. The general affliction of the eyes is due to filth and carelessness on the part of the people. When at work their hands come in contact with many unclean things, poisonous plants, &c. It never occurs to them to wash their hands, and as handkerchiefs are an unknown luxury, they rub the dirt and poison into the eyes when they wipe off the perspiration that flows freely from their foreheads under the broiling sun. Their other physical ailments come largely from similar causes. A cut or scratch from a thorn is poisoned and

kept inflamed and develops into a permanent running sore of vicious swelling.

Their food also, has much to do with their physical condition. They never eat meat, and bread is a luxury. Mangoes take the place of both. A sort of yam, usually eaten fried, is their principal vegetable. They eat land crabs and fresh fish only when they cannot sell what they have caught. A miserable quality of codfish made into very light, puffy fishballs, which are fried, is their chief breakfast dish. Milk is rare. Even at hotels, if you want enough for your morning coffee, you must give notice the night before. Everybody drinks black coffee, children included, and with meals cheap wine or water, which latter is not good and never filtered. And for all this poverty of food and drink there is absolutely no excuse except laziness. The finest fish are abundant in all the rivers and small streams. Most delicious small birds in any number are to be had for the killing. The climate and soil are excellently adapted to the cultivation of vegetables and fruits of all kinds, but the market only offers a few varieties. There is no thought of improving the size, quality or flavor of the vegetables. There are many beautiful native woods, but they serve no purpose. Ordinary reed-bottom chairs come from Marseilles.

The women particularly object to the introduction of new ideas, but in their own way and do what is to be done. They support themselves, their men and the country. Only one familiar with the existing state of affairs can realize what the French West Indies would be without the women. One may pass on the highroad early in the day a man and woman, the latter carrying on her head a great heavy mattress, and on top of it a gourd, that her lord may drink at wayside springs. Returning later one may meet the same couple, the woman still with the burden on her head, the man smoking a cigarette. But even the women with all their drudgery and hard work, have contempt for the value of time and love for the social amenities that are at times appalling. For handshaking and kissing they have a perfect mania. It is a fortunate thing for the buyers that the market women carry their loads on their heads, since it would delay their appearance at the market place by some hours if they had to stop to put down their loads each time they shake hands. But they manage, somehow even with this handicap, and the meeting of a particularly friendly pair gives the stranger a dizzy feeling as they approach each other for a tender greeting. They stand very close together, each putting a hand on the load for its security, sway a moment, stretch their necks and the blissful salute is effected.

But the danger is not over, for it requires steady nerve and a well-balanced head to regain the equilibrium after such combined contortion and emotion.

Whether from a passionate love of books and letters or a cunning desire to cope in all matters with the whites, the negro here at first displays an intense avidity for learning, and the facilities for acquiring knowledge are very good. For instance, the Carnot Lycee, opened in 1883, is an establishment of which any country might be proud. It consists of a main building and two immense wings, and is located on the highest spot in the city. It is so deep in an ideal spot surrounded by beautiful gardens, commanding a view of the sea. The amount allowed by the Government for its support is 6,000,000 francs, for, notwithstanding that, it averages from 80 to 100 boarders and from 200 to 300 day pupils and half boarders, its revenues are not equal to its expenses. The professors are all from the University of Paris and are of the highest possible standing, receiving large salaries. The Superintendent of Public instruction receives \$6,000 a year. The principal gets \$2,500, the steward and general treasurer \$4,000. Besides these there are twenty-eight professors receiving from \$125 to \$200 a month, and as the tuition for the school year of nine months for senior class is only \$180, it will readily be seen that a large grant is necessary to sustain the institution.

The suggestion that a similar school for young women be established in connection with Lycee met with so little public favor at first that the school board declined to assume the responsibility. The Lycee faculty thereupon started it on their own account, and it has succeeded beyond the expectation of the most sanguine. Slowly but surely the people are arriving at the conclusion that young women can receive instruction from men and yet not necessarily be demoralized. Of course, it is thus far only a day school, the young women being conducted thither by a member of the family or an old and trusted domestic and called for after school hours.

"Bear and For Bear."

Grizzly bears are becoming scarce in California; still they are occasionally found in the mountains, and when found, their great size and strength make them formidable antagonists. Experienced hunters tear them accordingly, while the novice rashly seeks an encounter. In 'Sketches of Life in the Golden State,' Col. Albert S. Evans narrates a rash exploit of an over sanguine hunter. A venturesome Yankee came to Santa Barbara some years ago, and soon became an adept at throwing the lasso. Hearing the Mexican cow-

boys talk of lassoing the grizzly bear, he decided to show them what he could do in that line if he ever got a chance. One day he came upon a grizzly in a favorable locality. He threw the lasso with skillful aim, and reined back his trembling horse to give the bear an astonished; when the reata—which is always attached to the pommel of the saddle—came up taut. Judge of the man's astonishment when that bear quietly assumed a sitting posture took hold of the lasso, and began to draw it in hand over hand. The hapless descendant of the Pilgrim Fathers stuck to the horse and saddle until he saw the slack drawn in, and the bear and the horse coming rapidly together. Then, in a panic, he descended and ran for a tree, abandoning the horse to its fate. Two skillful men, operating from opposite sides, can master a bear and choke him between them; but with only one man, one horse and one bear, it is another story.

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Dolly at Court.

In the 'Letters of Maria Josepha, Lady Stanley,' written in her early married life, there is one dated June 6, 1797, which quantity tells of the appearance of Mistress Dolly Stainforth at court on the king's birthday. Mistress Dolly was distinguished by her beautiful black arched eyebrows, the fine bloom of her cheeks, and the agreeable shaking of her head. Thus equipped, as the slightly satirical feminine pen puts it, and dressed with more than her splendor, she entered the royal apartment. Thither also had come the little Princess Charlotte, the Prince of Wales's daughter, who could just speak, and who is described as a remarkably sensible little child. The first object that struck her eyes was the "beauteous Mistress Stainforth," and she expressed her delight at so fine a sight by smiling and nodding to her and saying:

"Dolly, Dolly, pretty Dolly!"

This mark of distinction was so flattering, and the child's delight was so evident, that Mistress Stainforth thought proper to make a low courtesy, nodding her head with its tall feathers all the time; whereupon the child, who was 'very stout on her legs,' repeated the movement, mimicking it perfectly. Mistress Dolly started to return thanks, but no sooner did the child hear the sound of her voice than she began to cry and roar to such a degree that nothing could pacify her.

"What! Dolly speak! What! Dolly speak!" she cried.

The princesses, who knew what the child meant, were almost dead with laughing, and everybody was in a roar except the Prince of Wales, who, possibly out of a spirit of contradiction, looked grave.

'I have not heard concludes the sprightly letter-writer, 'whether Mistress Stainforth penetrated the cause of the scene, which was that the queen had the day before made the little princess a present of a large doll dressed in exactly the same sort of lilac colored gown, and shaking its head in precisely the same way. From the striking resemblance between Mistress Stainforth's eyebrows and cheeks and those of the doll, the child naturally imagined that she was looking at her own doll, sent from Carlton House, until it frightened her by speaking!'

Too Much of a Good Thing.

She: 'Don't you find journalism rather thankless work?'

He: 'Oh no. Almost everything I write is returned with thanks.'

Compulsory Pleasure.

Aimee: 'What is classical music?'

Maimie: 'Oh! Don't you know? It's the kind that you have to like whether you like it or not.'

'It was very kind of that naval officer to bring you this parrot,' said Maud. 'Yes,' answered Maimie. 'But the bird is so profane! "Shocking!" And that isn't the worst of it. It doesn't speak English, and I've got to hire an interpreter in order to understand him.'



"COME ALONG! DON'T BE AFRAID."