

JAMAICA,

AS IT WAS, AS IT IS, AND AS IT MAY BE:

COMPRISING

INTERESTING TOPICS

FOR

ABSENT PROPRIETORS, MERCHANTS, &c.

AND

Valuable Hints

TO

PERSONS INTENDING TO EMIGRATE TO THE ISLAND:

ALSO

AN AUTHENTIC NARRATIVE

OF

THE NEGRO INSURRECTION IN 1831;

WITH

A FAITHFUL DETAIL

OF THE

MANNERS, CUSTOMS AND HABITS OF THE COLONISTS,

AND A DESCRIPTION OF THE

Country, Climate, Productions, &c.

INCLUDING

AN ABRIDGMENT OF THE SLAVE LAW.

BY A RETIRED MILITARY OFFICER.

THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH, AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH.

LONDON:

T. HURST, 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD,
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CHAPTER X.

Harbours—Outports—Ventures of the Merchant Captain—Disorderly-houses in Kingston—The Press—How conducted—Expences of Newspapers and mode of Transmission—Periodicals—Merchants' Penns—Their Pride of Equipage—The Jews, their Establishments—The Current Coin—Port Royal Street—Hawkers—Medical Men—Country-built Vehicles—Taverns on the Road—Fare and Accommodation to be expected—Charges.

THE harbours in the island of Jamaica (in general) are tolerably secure; those of Port Royal and Kingston are well sheltered, and considered the most free from danger. That of Montego Bay, and a few more on the north side, are also pretty safe; but none, excepting Kingston, are what may be termed perfectly protected. To Kingston, the grand mart, vessels are arriving all the year round; but to the out-ports they commence making their appearance about December, and the harbours are all clear again by about August; many of the regular traders making two voyages in the interim. The government packets, sailing from Falmouth (England) at the commencement of each month, and the middle packets, sailing about the fifteenth, arrive, in due course, at Port Royal, in about five weeks from the actual day of departure. They formerly returned, the first after three weeks' sojourn in Jamaica; and the latter, after about twenty-four hours, but by a different route. The arrangement, however, is now much altered, and excessively inconvenient to the inhabitants, particularly to the mercantile classes;

as the regular packets remain only four or five days in the island, merely to await the return of an express post from the West End. All the men-of-war and packets anchor at Port Royal; but the merchant vessels run up to Kingston harbour, and draw in alongside of the wharfs. Although Kingston has already been noticed, it now comes again partially under our view, and we must say this city is the emporium and grand receptacle of every species of merchandize, carrying on a great commerce with America, as well as Great Britain and the Spanish Main. It cannot be denied, that, in the country parts, the residents are at a loss for numerous articles at times; but in Kingston never. There are innumerable stores, (or rather warehouses,) well supplied with every requisite, and, for *money*, almost any thing can be procured, even "*ice*." It has, however, before been mentioned, that the system of credit has reached such a pitch, that prices are commonly beyond any thing the reader could imagine. Perhaps, before we proceed, it is as well to state, that there are few towns situated elsewhere than on the coast on all sides of the island, consequently almost every town is a sea-port.

Kingston and Spanish Towns having been already described, we now proceed slightly to notice the out-ports. In fixing the period of arrival for the merchant vessels for December, it is not to be supposed that a straggler does not sometimes promiscuously drop in: his arrival is welcomed with "*joy unspeakable*;" for although the inhabitants can procure their beef, fish, and other luxuries; also possess their flocks of sheep, herds of swine, yards of poultry, and numerous other conveniences, and even

delicacies, the arrival of British potatoes, salt herrings, hams, tongues, cheese, tripe, and bacon, occasionally, is hailed with infinite joy; and the captains who first appear, will find an excellent and certain market for whatever they have speculated in. The articles above specified form the principal stock of a mercantile captain's venture, but many extend their trade still further. Brandy, hollands, biscuits, wood-hoops, coals, deal boards, boots, shoes, wearing apparel, millinery, and even jewellery, often form a part of their private speculations, and for which they frequently find ample recompence in the market. If money is not to be procured, produce, or even dye or hard woods, are an eligible payment; for it is, indeed, rare that the vessels are fully loaded, and the captains can always find room for a few casks of coffee, &c., or tons of wood, they here receive in payment of their own speculation. They are, in general, liberal and obliging men, bearing good characters; and, from the friendly intercourse subsisting between them and the inhabitants, probably originating in some having already been their passengers, and some intending to be so, a kind of cordiality exists that is beneficial to both parties. To the captain of a merchant vessel arriving in Jamaica, with good introduction, the contrast is immense, as regards his treatment, to what he experiences in England, where he seems scarcely known. In Jamaica, he is even a welcome guest, kindly received, and hospitably entertained; nor does he refuse the performance of any little commission in England, with which he may be entrusted by the warm-hearted friends who thus render his stay in Jamaica more a pleasure than a toil, as it otherwise would prove. Should he not

be so fortunate as to have disposed of all his commodities on his departure, he either leaves it to be sold on commission by a mercantile acquaintance, or rids himself of it wholesale, by making a trifling sacrifice, which his former sales will usually well admit of. Taking all the ports throughout the island, perhaps January may be fixed as the month in which the majority of vessels arrive. At this period it is, indeed, a busy scene from day-break till sun-set. Waggon's are seen bringing produce to the wharfs, and returning with the estates' supplies, negro clothing, &c. &c. Boats are constantly flying about the harbours, and at the out-ports, the conche-shell and negro song are heard for miles up the stream, (for few are without a river,) ere they reach the wharf at which the contents of their *bungay*, (an immense flat-bottomed boat) are to be delivered. Ships' boats are also plying in every direction, loaded with casks of sugar, rum, coffee, &c., others with logwood, fustic or ebony, for dunnage, also bags of pimento, &c.

To witness these scenes, a stranger newly arrived would conceive the inhabitants of all classes, but particularly the slaves, to be the happiest in the world; for joy and hilarity are visible in the countenance of all we meet, and every kind of work seems transformed into pleasure. According as the crops are forwarded, so the vessels depart; and some few that are destined to try the second voyage, during the season, manage to sail early in March, so as to return to Jamaica at the latter end of June, or beginning of July. Shipping employs a great number of negroes in discharging and receiving their cargoes, as stowing the hold in so oppressively hot a

climate is sadly trying to the white sailor. It is natural to suppose that where rum is so cheap, occasional cases of intoxication will occur; but, taking all things into consideration, the conduct of the British tar, even under such temptation, is far from being licentious. The laws are strict, the commanders very circumspect, and thus the crews remain orderly. Since, however, at the port of Kingston, scarcely a day passes without some arrivals and departures, it is not a matter of surprise that the city is sometimes the scene of a little brawling between the sailors and negroes. In fact, numbers of free negroes have fixed themselves in different parts of the city, and particularly about the suburbs, where they keep very disorderly houses, principally for the reception and entertainment of sailors. In these, all kinds of drunkenness and debauchery are practised; but it is to be hoped that, under the new system, such nuisances will be abated, if not entirely removed.

With one or two exceptions, all newspapers are published in the principal towns, and the press is pretty fairly conducted, having, as is always the case, newspapers of different politics well edited. *The Kingston Chronicle*, by Mr. Struper; and *the Jamaica Courant*, by Mr. Bruce, take the lead as daily papers, and are hotly, sometimes intemperately, opposed to each other. An inferior publication, under the title of *The Watchman*, came out in 1831, edited by persons of colour; but, from the virulence and indecency with which it attacked the respectable part of the community, it received but little patronage. Since the rebellion, *The Isonomist*, by Mr. Beaumont, has appeared. From the talents of its editor, the publication soon got into wide circulation;

but, as those talents were not always appropriated to the most beneficial and edifying purposes, it frequently occurred that paragraphs were exceptionable, and many discontinued it. *The Royal*, and *Saint Jago de la Vega, Gazettes*, by Mr. Aillman and Mr. Lunan, are most respectably edited, and furnish authentic intelligence; they are, however, weekly papers. *The Cornwall Chronicle*, published at Montego Bay, and conducted by Mr. Holmes, stands high in public estimation for the correctness of its local information; and, judging from the circumstance of its having obtained a very extensive circulation, must be considered a meritorious journal. The price of a paper is about five pounds currency per annum, and are forwarded by the weekly post to all parts of the island; consequently, there are few people who do not indulge in one or other of the newspapers. The mail bags leave Kingston post-office during the afternoon of Saturday, at different hours. The windward post is first dispatched, then that of the north-side, and, lastly, the one for the south-side. Each is conveyed by a negro mounted on a mule, leading another mule, on which is affixed the mail-bags: unless when an accident occurs, from negligence in properly fixing the bags, the conveyance is tolerably expeditious, and pretty regular. But during the heavy seasons (rains) the post is frequently detained from the Rio Minho (dry river) being impassable, sometimes for days together, and there has never been a bridge thrown over it. No delivery of letters takes place in the country; consequently, whatever may be the distance, every individual is compelled to send to the post-office for his letters, &c. The charge is seven-

pence-halfpenny (called "a bit") for the first hundred miles, and any thing short of it, for a single letter, and twice that sum for the rest of the distance, whatever it may be. Of course double letters are charged in proportion. Between Kingston and Spanish Town, however, there is a daily post, leaving the former place in the morning, and returning in the evening; nor could this possibly be dispensed with, as the mercantile community is principally confined to Kingston, and most of the law business transacted in Spanish Town.

In addition to the newspapers already mentioned, there are various periodicals which occasionally burst forth, flourish for a time and then disappear. The greater proportion of this class invariably prostitute their pages with personal invective; although they assume, in general, a title that would lead the public to believe their matter to be of the purest and most innocent composition.

Even should the newly arrived inhabitant possess leisure for a temporary sojourn in Kingston, it would be unjustifiable here to recommend it, *unless his lot is cast in that city*, and he has no means of *seasoning* in the cooler part, of the island; for although the climate there is endured by hundreds, yet all who can avoid its consequences invariably make their escape as early as possible. For instance, there is scarcely a merchant who does not live at a short distance from it, at a cooler residence, termed his "*penn.*" After the fatigues of the day, his gig drives up to the store-door precisely at four o'clock. It is the duty of a clerk to see every thing properly secured, which is done under his superintendence by one or more of the store negroes. The merchant

steps into his chaise, and either drives, or is driven by his boy, out to his penn, where he finds the family awaiting his arrival. After a comfortable change of apparel, his enjoyment commences, very probably with visitors; and, after a meal genteelly served, the evening is spent according to his station in society and circumstances. On the morrow, after breakfast, he again proceeds to his store, by the same conveyance, and reaches it by ten o'clock. There is nothing in which the merchants so much pride themselves as their equipages: a handsome vehicle of the latest fashion, with a spirited horse of fine figure and good action, well groomed and elegantly caparisoned, seems the acme of their ambition. The knowing manner in which he drives up to his premises, the livery of his valet, even the grace with which he springs from his cabriolet, are particularly noticed by his neighbours.

Here we must allow that our brethren of the Hebrew nation greatly eclipse the christians in taste, splendour, ingenuity, and management. The truth is, they take a pride in doing so, and try it at any expence. In people of this persuasion Kingston abounds; and many are not only wealthy, but highly respected members of society. It is not long since a bill was passed in the house of assembly, much to the credit of the members, conceding to the Jews all the privileges enjoyed by the christian community, and all must acknowledge that the boon was not misapplied. Some of their establishments are very splendid, both as regards the private residence, and the public place of business; and although a christian certainly must be clever to make *an advantageous dealing with a Jew*, yet he will find the

liberal and gentlemanly feeling predominate during the intercourse. They carry on the principal part of the Spanish trade; and some of the firms also do a great deal of business with the Americans.

The current coin, is either the *Spanish* or the *Columbian* doubloon, pistole, half-pistole and dollar, in gold. The dollar, half-dollar, quarter-dollar, (or macaroni;) ten pence, bit (or royal,) and five-pence, in silver; copper is never seen. There being no bank, of course there is no paper-money, with the exception of island checks, and drafts on Kingston merchants, and other responsible individuals, which are common payments in the country parts, and denominated "*town orders.*" Good bills of exchange on Great Britain have averaged the high premium of twenty per cent. for the last fifteen years.

Although the prices of goods may at first appear exorbitant, it is a notorious fact that, at times, articles may be procured considerably cheaper than they can be imported, particularly when a firm is closing sales, or winding up consignments.

It has been jocosely said of the Jews, that they will "*rather lose by the sale of an article, than lose the chance of making a sale!*" because they calculate on making it up the next dealing.

All who have been at Kingston will know who are the inhabitants of Port Royal Street; and those who have not, must be informed that this street is extensive, reaching completely along one portion of the harbour, where all the most extensive wharfs are situated, at the back of one range of the houses in Port Royal Street. Jews and christians indiscriminately occupy stores in this mercantile part of Kingston; and, indeed, many who have removed

to a much finer street and situation, have deemed it expedient to return, from the apparently simple circumstance, that the Spaniards, or other traders from the main, will not take the trouble to travel beyond this point in search of piece goods, and other articles they require.

In Kingston there are some good coffee-rooms, where refreshments of every kind may be obtained at all hours, of the best quality, and at a moderate price: many of the merchants, &c. find this a great convenience, and these establishments are well patronized.

The stranger, while passing from one street to another, must make up his mind to be somewhat pestered by hawkers, principally of the Jewish tribe, who sometimes sell articles uncommonly cheap; but these are usually goods that they themselves have purchased at some sale of an insolvent's stock, and seldom to be relied on for the measure or quality described. They, however, know that a person often buys something to avoid their importunate applications.

Kingston is well provided with medical men of first rate abilities; and taking into consideration the labour and risks they undergo, the establishments they must necessarily maintain, and the number of quadrupeds they annually lose from over-fatigue, and other casualties, the charges they make are not exorbitant, although it appears so to one unacquainted with these contingencies. It is no uncommon thing for a medical bill to be disputed; and should it come to a trial, the practitioner rarely succeeds in obtaining the full extent of his charges: but even this must not be deemed a proof of the overcharge,

as, in many cases, the legal rate is perfectly inadequate to the services performed. Nevertheless, some individuals are apt to err greatly on the opposite side.

As regards carriages, it has been found that vehicles built of the country woods will stand the brunt of the climate considerably better than those imported, particularly in travelling where the owner is not always so fortunate as to meet with a covered shed, or chaise-house, at every place where he makes a stage. Independent of this, the negro valets are not notorious for the most scrupulous attention to their masters' conveyances, when an arrival about sun-set prevents their actions from being superintended. In consequence of the intense heat of the climate, the constant inequalities in, and oftentimes extremely rugged state of the roads, and the irregular periods at which they are fed, no horse can be depended on to perform a journey of any distance, moderate in comparison to the customary English travelling; hence arises the train of led horses that invariably form a part of the traveller's equipage. When it can be accomplished, some are sent forward the previous day; but this can only be effected when the master conceives he can trust the negro he intends to dispatch with them; and seldom, indeed, would this be done, if he knew what way the money was to be expended which he appropriated for the support of his animals. Throughout the whole island, with some exceptions, the inns along the roads (always called *taverns*) are of a very indifferent class, and the charges much too high for the accommodation afforded. A roast capon, or broiled chicken, (just caught)

with a dish of fried ham and eggs, is the best fare to be expected, as nothing fresh is kept, in consequence of the uncertainty of callers. A dish of cocoas or yams, with a few roast plantains, completes the repast, for which ten shillings currency per head is the charge. A bottle of common Teneriffe wine, (there called *Madeira*,) is six shillings and eight-pence, and a bottle of porter two shillings and sixpence; a poor bed is six shillings and eight-pence; and a slight breakfast next morning, with eggs, is five shillings each, at least.

At each port is stationed a collector of the customs, a comptroller, land and tide surveyor, surveyor and admeasurer of shipping, besides land-waiters and searchers. To this department is also attached a solicitor.

The naval establishment consists of a commander-in-chief, who has his own secretary, an agent, a contractor for victualling the squadron with fresh beef and vegetables, and a contractor for sea provisions.

To the *Naval Yard*, a commissioner, with two clerks, store-keeper; with two clerks, and extra ditto, when occasion requires; a master clerk, and master attendant, with clerk to ditto; master shipwright, foreman, and clerk; boatswain, store porter, and gate porter.

The *Naval Hospital* maintains a surgeon, agent and clerk, dispenser, porter, and matron.

The *Ecclesiastical Court* formerly consisted of four commissaries, a registrar, and apparitor, notwithstanding the livings were in the gift of the governor; but since the appointment of the bishop, the court has been discontinued, as all ecclesiastical jurisdiction and controul is centered in his lordship. This spiritual officer performs every duty incidental to his appointment, and makes occasional tours though his extensive diocese for the purposes of ordination, visitation, &c. The island has greatly benefited by this wise act of the government, as the ecclesiastical functions were previously but loosely carried on.

The *General Post-Office* next claims attention. This department comprises a deputy postmaster-general, a chief and numerous other clerks, in Kingston, and deputy postmasters stationed at

proper and convenient distances along the post-roads in every direction. The windward post-road extends 64 miles. That of the North side to Port Antonio, 60. North side to Port Maria, 42. North side to Green Island, 151; and that of the South side to Sav. la Mar, 119. In a climate like Jamaica, where the messengers are of the negro race, it is rather surprising so few accidents happen the conveyance of letters, particularly as the weather is sometimes extremely unfavourable.

Of the *island militia*, the governor, from his rank of captain-general, holds the supreme command; but, having under him a major-general for every district, the duties are entirely delegated to them, as regards the internal management, reviews, &c. &c. The staff appointments are numerous, and consist of one adjutant-general, and two assistant ditto; two deputy adjutant-generals, a quarter-master-general, three deputy ditto; a muster-master-general, three deputy ditto; judge-advocate-general, three deputy ditto; inspector-general of hospitals, physician-general, assistant physician-general, deputy ditto for Cornwall; surgeon-general, surgeon-general for Cornwall; a major-commandant of artillery for Middlesex, ditto for Surrey, ditto for Cornwall.

The *Middlesex Regiment of Horse* consists of ten troops, at different stations in the country, and one regiment of foot for each parish.

The *Surrey Regiment of Horse* consists of nine troops, and one regiment of foot to each parish.

The *City of Kingston*, however, has two battalions.

The *Cornwall Regiment of Horse* consists of six troops, and there is a regiment of foot to each of its parishes.