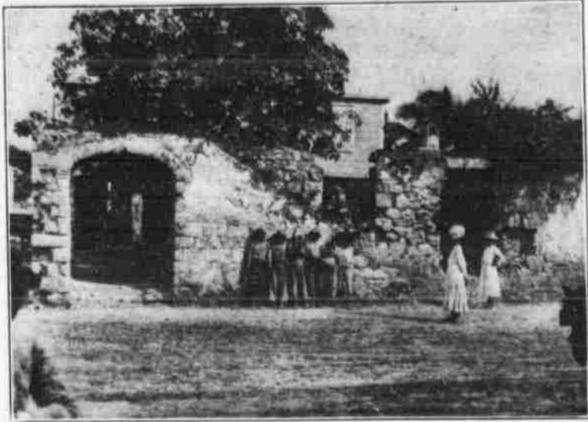
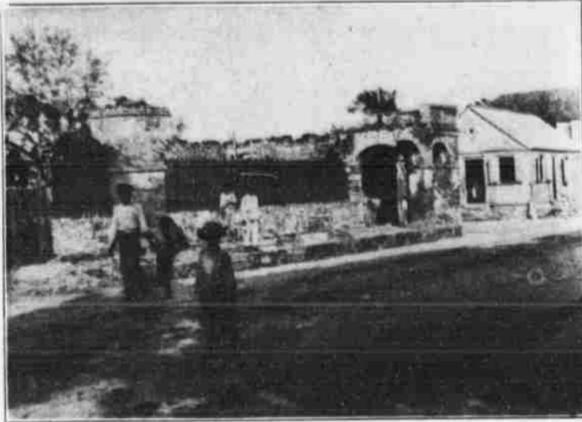


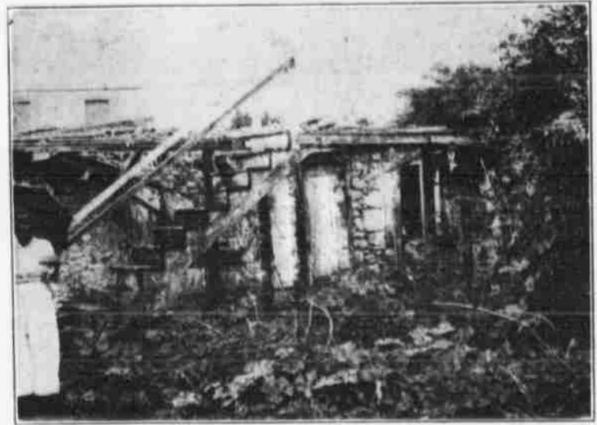
Black Peril of the Danish Isles



GROUP OF CHILDREN AT SANTA CRUZ.



RUINS LEFT BY NEGRO UPRISING.



"STEPS WHICH LEAD UP TO BLUE SKY."

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THE obliging planter who shows the visitor through the town of Christiansted, in Santa Cruz, the largest of the Danish islands, will willingly call attention to the ruins of many buildings and inform him with great volubility how many people were killed in each one, with many other details of the damage done by the cyclone of 1898. But every now and then one will come across a ruin quite different from the others, whose blackened stones tell plainly that fire and not the hurricane was the cause of its destruction. If asked the cause of this destruction the guide at once becomes evasive and non-committal. Without actually saying so, he will try to give the impression that it was the work of the storm. If, however, like the writer, one had seen these same dismantled warehouses thirteen years before, the guide, under persistent questioning, will murmur something about an insurrection many years ago and at once change the subject—his whole bearing that of a man forced on the witness stand to reveal the family skeleton.

And, indeed, these sharp points of smoke-stained walls that persist in towering above the wealth of glossy green which kindly nature has striven to throw over them are, after all, the unsightly ribs of disgrace your planter friend would fain forget.

Witnesses to Terrible Possibilities.

To the cheerful sound of lusty hammers and clinking trowels the storm-raised buildings are being restored to their former state again. But on these fire-crumbled stones a curse seems to have fallen. Like the mummy at the banquet, perpetually they bear witness to the terrible possibilities of evil that lurk in the dull brains of these same negro laborers who, care free, constantly pass by with coarse jest and idle laughter.

As the same negroes who wrought this ruin, with their descendants form today nine-tenths of the population of our new Danish possessions, some account of this riot and its causes may be of value to us in studying what is after all the real problem concerning these islands, namely: What political rights are to be granted to their inhabitants?

Accurate information on the subject is very difficult to obtain. The books published about the West Indies barely mention the insurrection or ignore it entirely. The semi-official West Indian almanac, published at St. Thomas, skips deftly over it with a brief sentence. The annexationists are afraid to mention it lest it injure their cause, and it was only after much trouble that the writer found one who had lived through that exciting time and was willing to talk about it.

Amid the wreck of what had once been a fine dwelling, seated on crumbling steps that led up to nothing more substantial than the blue, tropic sky, his voice quivered with emotion as he talked.

Mistake of Danish Government.

The foundation of the trouble was really laid by a fatal error of the government in

1848, a mistake which has never been forgotten by the negro and may yet be bitterly regretted by our government. At that time it was announced that slavery would soon be abolished. As was the case in all the other islands, this news proved too much for the negro's mental equilibrium. As the appointed date drew near he refused to work, and, taking first to drinking, quite naturally wound up the celebration by a bit of rioting. Had the disturbance been put down with a strong hand no permanent harm would have been done. But, instead, against the protest of the cooler heads, the government in a panic of unreasoning fear, proclaimed the liberation of the slaves at once, ahead of time.

The rioting immediately ceased, but the negroes had tasted the sweets of power. Though they had been but yesterday a mass of whip-driven slaves, now they could rule their former masters with the awful scourge of the mob. Although they waited thirty long years, they had not forgotten.

Slavery had been succeeded by the "labor law," under which every negro was compelled to sign a contract with some planter on the 1st of each October, binding himself to work through the ensuing year for 10 cents in cash and 10 cents in food a day. Any found after the 2d of October who had not signed such a contract were punished.

Even this unsatisfactory arrangement was so much better than previous conditions, that at first there were no complaints. Each October, however, dissatisfaction grew stronger until, in 1877, the mutterings of a gathering uprising against the law were heard. The government announced a repeal of the law to take effect three years from date.

Beginning the Riot.

Again they had triumphed. The leaders of the uprising of 1848 recalled the easy victory of the past. Three years was a long time to wait, but still they hesitated. As the first of October, 1878, drew near, however, it was noticed that a new spirit of insolence had appeared among the laborers. As they assembled in the towns where the contracts were to be renewed, there was much disorder. On the morning of the first, the planters were surprised to find a well organized opposition to the renewal of the contracts. Arguments, threats, promises, all proved unavailing. Every hour fresh bands of negroes, armed with keen machetes, marched into town, chanting fragments of wild African melodies. Toward dusk the merchants, fearing trouble, put up their heavy shutters, and the townsfolk returned to their homes. A swift sloop—there was no cable then—set sail for St. Thomas, bearing urgent appeals for help from the tiny Danish garrison there.

At first the mob was contented with marching up and down the deserted streets, howling the rallying cry: "No more 10 cents a day." Shouting was a thirst-producing exercise; a rum shop door might, perhaps, be broken in. Yes, it was quite easy, there was refreshment for all at no expense. The flambeaus of resinous wood began to wave unsteadily in the hands of their bearers. How easy it would be merely to lay one of the torches against the huge

wooden doors of the sugar warehouse! Yes, dry with age, it caught fire quickly. Like children terrified at their own wickedness, they paused a moment; the red fire leaped through the building; in a twinkling the soft blue-black of the midnight tropic sky was hidden by a lurid veil of crimson smoke, shot through and through with dazzling streaks; with the strong rum seething in their veins, they danced the wild jungle dances of their forefathers to its light. With brains awl, they staggered from one building to another. The red glare crept in through the closed blinds behind which the frightened townsfolk crouched, shuddering with terror. Woe to those traders whose dealings had been harsh or unfair! Only at the imminent peril of their lives might they steal from their burning homes to safety. Brighter grew the glare, back on the hillsides an answering glare appeared. Long tongues of flame crept up the hills from the burning fields of cane. The sites of the planters' homes were marked by brighter, higher flames. Wilder and madder grew the chanting, merely hoarse howls of savage joy, now, all semblance of articulate words lost.

End of the Onslaught.

The black forms dancing around the burning buildings stood silhouetted like fiends around the mouth of hell. The whole island was wrapped in flames. Still, strange as it seems, no lives were lost. The morning came unsmoke save for the lighting up of the dense blue smoke that filled the streets. A planter rode bravely into town, forgetting that these former slaves had tasted freedom and power. Maddened at the ruin of his estate, he rode straight into the mob, lashing right and left with his heavy riding whip. For an instant the crowd fell back, the old instinct still strong. For an instant it seemed that daring would succeed. Then a huge negro, his face bleeding from a cut of the lash, and working with brute passion, leaped forward and seized a stirrup. In an instant it was all over. A swirl of half-naked black forms, the piercing neigh of a dying horse, the awful cry, half scream, half curse of a human being in the throes of a fearful death, and it was done. Seized by a strange panic, the mob turned and fled. A bundle of red-stained, muddy clothes lay in a sickening heap, very quiet, on the cobblestones.

Of the deeds done that dreadful day there remains no record. Gaunt chimneys, towering like seared, ungainly monuments above the smouldering ashes of the factories around them, mile after mile of black, unlighted fields veiled in a sickening, deep blue smoke—these alone could tell the tale. Strangely enough, that red stain, slowly thickening on the cobblestones, marked the only human victim of the mob. Satiated with their wild orgy, there was a lull and then—the prayed-for troops arrived. Only 200 of them, what could they do against 6,000 savages? Yesterday they had been torn to pieces in an instant, but now, reaction had set in. Frightened at their own daring, the negroes fled before the soldiers. Swiftly, relentlessly, the rioters were hunted down. There is no record of the number that satisfied the thirst for vengeance with their lives, but

tales are told of black forms lying huddled on burned cane heaps that were buried with scant ceremony, and, presently, under the sanction of the law, 600 figures writhed helplessly in the air, suspended from rude gibbets, outlined against the splendor of the sunset sky.

Such was the story told me by the old man sitting on the fire-scarred stairway that led upward, most absurdly, to nothing but the blue sky.

Mistake is Repeated.

Yet, even in its hour of triumph, the government repeated its mistake. The labor law was declared abolished again ahead of time. Can one wonder that the negro still feels that the triumph was his, after all?

"There is no danger of riots now," the annexationists will tell you, "for this happened twenty years ago." Yet one remembers that there were thirty years between '48 and '78 and the conditions and surroundings of plantation life are practically the same.

The negro child from 5 to 13 years of age is compelled, theoretically, to attend the public school. Practically he escapes much of it, as every year the family moves into a new district in search of work, and it must all be begun over again. During this time he has learned what? To stumble through the first reader, the most elementary geography, arithmetic only as far as fractions and a few words of Danish, learned by rote and almost instantly forgotten. After that he must take up his machete and begin the dreary hunt for work. There is practically no place open to him save the cane fields, and in these dark days, with the slender profits of the sugar crop dropping fraction by fraction, it is none too easy a matter to find work even there. Hundreds have left in the past few years, and the other islands have sent notices, conspicuously posted on the custom house doors, stating that further immigration is useless, as they are no better off themselves. In this competition for work wages have naturally dropped and 20 cents a day is not an uncommon rate anywhere.

His Work Not Pleasant.

The planters complain bitterly that the negro will work only when he pleases. About five days a week is his average. A little thought will show that this is not surprising. As a slave he worked only long enough to satisfy his cheaply supplied wants. It is not a pleasant task, this laboring in the cane fields. White men have tried it and died miserably, quickly, in the effort. In planting time the fierce sun beats remorselessly on his bended back. Ice cold showers sweep down without warning from the mountains and drench him through and through. At harvest he must take his place in the long line and swing the heavy machete hour after hour, cutting the thick stalks. With the precision of an army, the long line of black figures, naked to the waist, sweep over the vast fields, the overseers, the like officers, following with watchful eyes to detect a straggler or shirker. From a distance they look like a procession of

huge black ants gnawing their way through a field of tender grass.

Soon a deep, mellow voice begins to hum a familiar air; quickly it is taken up by the others until, swelling into a weird chant, it sweeps down the line, the flashing steel rising and falling in unison with its strange barbaric rhythm. The dry dust rises beneath their tread and settles in their nostrils; no breeze penetrates the dense cane growth, it is hot with the stifling heat that sometimes swells the death roll in our northern cities. With the perspiration streaming from every black pore they move on, on, all through the weary day. Perhaps five days a week of this would satisfy the best of us.

His Home and Religion.

When our negro, fresh from the schools, finds labor such as this, he straightway settles down and takes unto himself a wife, with or without the formality of a wedding, as may seem most convenient. A wretched hut of palms and cane is built—well named a "trash" house, and his life-work has begun. Small wonder if the rum shop, where the strong native liquor that brings such delightful forgetfulness at 2 cents per glass may be obtained, attracts him in his leisure hours. Still smaller wonder that the little knowledge he has gained fades utterly from his brain.

As for his religion—well, the church is very far, but the "obeah" man very near, indeed. The parish priest and the Lutheran minister are by all means to be respected and even on occasion heeded, but they live in their neat houses near the churches. Well, the "obeah" man, with his white hair and awful charms, lives but two whits away and is to be very greatly feared, indeed. A close friend of that terrible devil you hear so much about in the churches can make your hair fall out and your flesh rot with a few muttered words. He can even, if occasion required and you have sufficient money, give you certain curious herbs, which, properly mixed with a rival's food, will end all trouble from that quarter.

So his life runs—work, drink and constant dread of the "obeah" man, while curious tourists from passing steamers write down notes, placing him a little lower than the beasts.

Whose fault is this?

Danger is Real.

What we may do for this negro of Santa Cruz let those skilled in such matters answer. This is a simple statement of facts pointing a plain moral. As he was thirty years ago so is this negro today. Do not think his long peacefulness means no danger in the future. A few weeks ago, when the false news was received that the sale of the islands had been abandoned, a Danish warship was dispatched post haste to the island, as another insurrection was feared. The existing law, requiring a property qualification, bars the negro from the ballot. There are but 200 legal voters among the 18,000 inhabitants of Santa Cruz. This law, for the present at least, must be left alone, and what is more important for a future peace and progress no promises of changes should be made.

Lights and Shadows of Bench and Bar

MAGISTRATE Brann, while sitting recently in the Centre street court, relates the New York Times, was required to pass judgment on a prisoner of Hibernian descent who had been arrested for intoxication. Mr. Brann is known for his comments.

"The Irishman," he remarked dryly, "is facile princeps when it comes to getting drunk."

The prisoner leaned toward the magistrate and asked in a low, anxious voice: "How many days did you say, your honor?"

"You admit that you are a tramp, do you?" said the eminent counsel to the witness, according to the Detroit Free Press.

"Yes, sir."

"Tell this jury, sir, why you lead such a worse than useless life."

"The explanation is simple. I am too proud to work and too honest to become a lawyer."

"In Esquire Roberts' court recently," says the Fulton (Ky.) Leader, "a boy was

put on the witness stand, and to ascertain if he knew the nature of an oath the justice interviewed him as follows: "Do you know the nature of an oath?" "Don't know whether I do or not." "Well, if you should tell a lie, do you know where you would go when you die?" "Yes, sir." "Where?" "Well, when we moved out here pap said if any of us lied he would take us back to Arkansas and I reckon he'll be as good as his word."

The late Judge Smyth, so much better known as "The Recorder," says the New York Times, used to have a reminiscence of another lawyer who now enjoys much distinction at the bar and for a time rejoiced in judicial honors, but who was at the time the managing clerk of a law office on the same corridor with that of the future recorder.

"I met him in the hall one day," said the old judge, "and he was evidently very much agitated. I inquired the nature of his trouble. Almost weeping, he answered: 'I have been discharged, discharged without a word of explanation, after five years' of

faithful service. It is very hard.' And then he quite gave way and added, in tears: 'And you know, Mr. Smyth, you know what affidavits I have made for that man.'"

In a certain case the judge ordered the sheriff to call the roll of thirty-five "good men and true" selected for jury duty, relates the St. Louis Globe-Democrat. Only twenty-two answered to their names, and the sheriff looked somewhat inquiringly at the judge, but the latter was calmly wiping his glasses while he uttered the customary, "Any desiring to be excused from service on this jury will now come forward." Twenty-two men made a movement forward, and the clerk stopped in his work of noting those who had failed to respond to the summons to look in wonder at the entire venire desiring to escape. "Well," said the judge, speaking to a long, thin, nervous looking young man, "why do you wish to be excused?" "If it please your honor," answered the aforesaid thin individual, "I'd like to be excused on account of illness. I'm suffering from some-

thing that might prove embarrassing to the others jurors, and is certainly embarrassing to me." "What is the nature of your illness?" asked the judge. "Well," said the young man, hesitatingly, "I'd prefer to tell you in private. I'm somewhat delicate about speaking of it in public." "I cannot hear anything in private," responded the judge, impatiently. "If you want to be excused you must tell me here and now what is the matter with you." "Well, if I must tell it here—I have the itch." "The itch?" echoed the judge, and, turning to the clerk, without marking how apropos his observation was, said, "Mr. Jones, scratch the juror off."

Judge Edwards of Lee county, who has married over 100 couples since he has been ordinary, performed the ceremony recently for a runaway couple seated in a buggy in the public road, reports the Atlanta Constitution.

The ceremony over, the bridegroom fumbled in his pocket and fished up 36 cents. "Judge," he said, "this here's all the

money I got in the roun' worl'. Ef you're a-mind to take it, you kin, but I'll say straight-for-ards that I'd done sot it aside for the honeymoon expenses!"

"Who represents the defendant in this case?" queried Justice Hall of Chicago after he had announced that the case of the People against Aird had been reached on the docket.

"I do," replied Stephen A. Douglas, stepping before the bar.

"And the prosecution will be handled by?"

"Robert E. Lee."

"I'm more than glad to meet you, gentlemen," declared Justice Hall, warmly. "Your names are quite familiar to me."

The spectators in the court looked amazed as they listened to the conversation. "I 'ot them was both dead," remarked a small boy.

Lee, a distant relative of the confederate general, is city prosecutor at the Harrison street police court, and Attorney Douglas, son of the "Little Giant," represented the defendant in a larceny case.