

THE HISTORY OF  
MARY PRINCE

A WEST INDIAN SLAVE

*Edited by* SARA SALIH

London  
PENGUIN BOOKS  
2006

THE  
HISTORY OF MARY PRINCE,  
A WEST INDIAN SLAVE.

RELATED BY HERSELF.

WITH A SUPPLEMENT BY THE EDITOR.

To which is added,

THE NARRATIVE OF ASA-ASA,  
A CAPTURED AFRICAN.

“By our sufferings, since ye brought us  
To the man-degrading mart,—  
All sustain'd by patience, taught us  
Only by a broken heart,—  
Deem our nation brutes no longer,  
Till some reason ye shall find  
Worthier of regard, and stronger  
Than the colour of our kind.” COWPER.

THIRD EDITION.

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## PREFACE

The idea of writing Mary Prince's history was first suggested by herself. She wished it to be done, she said, that good people in England might hear from a slave what a slave had felt and suffered; and a letter of her late master's, which will be found in the Supplement,<sup>1</sup> induced me to accede to her wish without farther delay. The more immediate object of the publication will afterwards appear.

The narrative was taken down from Mary's own lips by a lady<sup>2</sup> who happened to be at the time residing in my family as a visitor. It was written out fully, with all the narrator's repetitions and prolixities, and afterwards pruned into its present shape; retaining, as far as was practicable, Mary's exact expressions and peculiar phraseology. No fact of importance has been omitted, and not a single circumstance or sentiment has been added. It is essentially her own, without any material alteration farther than was requisite to exclude redundancies and gross grammatical errors, so as to render it clearly intelligible.

After it had been thus written out, I went over the whole, carefully examining her on every fact and circumstance detailed; and in all that relates to her residence in Antigua I had the advantage of being assisted in this scrutiny by Mr Joseph Phillips,<sup>3</sup> who was a resident in that colony during the same period, and had known her there.

The names of all the persons mentioned by the narrator have been printed in full, except those of Capt. I— and his wife, and that of Mr D—, to whom conduct of peculiar atrocity is ascribed. These three individuals are now gone to answer at a far more awful tribunal than that of public opinion, for the deeds of which their former bondswoman

accuses them; and to hold them up more openly to human reprobation could no longer affect themselves, while it might deeply lacerate the feelings of their surviving and perhaps innocent relatives, without any commensurate public advantage.

Without detaining the reader with remarks on other points, which will be adverted to more conveniently in the Supplement, I shall here merely notice farther, that the Anti-Slavery Society<sup>4</sup> have no concern whatever with this publication, nor are they in any degree responsible for the statements it contains. I have published the tract, not as their Secretary, but in my private capacity; and any profits that may arise from the sale will be exclusively appropriated to the benefit of Mary Prince herself.

While Mary's history was in the press, I was furnished by my friend Mr George Stephen<sup>5</sup> with the interesting narrative of Asa-Asa,<sup>6</sup> a captured African now under his protection, and have printed it as a suitable appendix.

THO. PRINGLE<sup>7</sup>

London, January 25, 1831.

POSTSCRIPT - SECOND EDITION<sup>8</sup>

Since the First Edition of this Tract was published, Mary Prince has been afflicted with a disease in the eyes, which, it is feared, may terminate in total blindness: such, at least, is the apprehension of some skilful medical gentlemen who have been consulted on the case. Should this unfortunately be the result, the condition of the poor negro woman, thus cruelly and hopelessly severed from her husband and her home, will be one peculiarly deserving of commiseration; and I mention the circumstance at present on purpose to induce the friends of humanity to promote the more zealously the sale of this publication, with a view to provide a little fund for her future benefit. Whatever be the subsequent lot that Providence may have in reserve for her, the reasonable sympathy thus manifested in her behalf, will neither be fruitlessly expended nor unthankfully received; while, in accordance with the benign Scripture mandate, it will serve to mitigate and relieve,

as far as human kindness can, the afflictions of 'the stranger and the exile who is in our land within our gates.'<sup>9</sup>

T.P.

March 22, 1831.

\* \* \* The present Cheap-Edition, price 1s. for single copies, and 6d. each, if 25 or more are ordered, is printed expressly to facilitate the circulation of this Tract by Anti-Slavery Societies.

THE  
HISTORY OF MARY PRINCE,  
A WEST INDIAN SLAVE

*(Related by herself)*

I WAS born at Brackish-Pond, in Bermuda,<sup>10</sup> on a farm belonging to Mr Charles Myners. My mother was a household slave; and my father, whose name was Prince, was a sawyer belonging to Mr Trimmingham, a ship-builder at Crow-Lane.<sup>11</sup> When I was an infant, old Mr Myners died, and there was a division of the slaves and other property among the family. I was bought along with my mother by old Captain Darrel, and given to his grandchild, little Miss Betsey Williams. Captain Williams, Mr Darrel's son-in-law, was master of a vessel which traded to several places in America and the West Indies, and he was seldom at home long together.

Mrs Williams was a kind-hearted good woman, and she treated all her slaves well. She had only one daughter, Miss Betsey, for whom I was purchased, and who was about my own age. I was made quite a pet of by Miss Betsey, and loved her very much. She used to lead me about by the hand, and call me her little nigger. This was the happiest period of my life; for I was too young to understand rightly my condition as a slave, and too thoughtless and full of spirits to look forward to the days of toil and sorrow.

My mother was a household slave<sup>12</sup> in the same family. I was under her own care, and my little brothers and sisters were my play-fellows and companions. My mother had several fine children after she came to Mrs Williams, - three girls and two boys. The tasks given out to us children were light, and we used to play together with Miss Betsey, with as much freedom almost as if she had been our sister.

My master, however, was a very harsh, selfish man; and we always dreaded his return from sea. His wife was herself much afraid of him;

and, during his stay at home, seldom dared to shew her usual kindness to the slaves. He often left her, in the most distressed circumstances, to reside in other female society, at some place in the West Indies of which I have forgot the name. My poor mistress bore his ill-treatment with great patience, and all her slaves loved and pitied her. I was truly attached to her, and, next to my own mother, loved her better than any creature in the world. My obedience to her commands was cheerfully given: it sprung solely from the affection I felt for her, and not from fear of the power which the white people's law had given her over me.

I had scarcely reached my twelfth year when my mistress became too poor to keep so many of us at home; and she hired me out to Mrs Pruden, a lady who lived about five miles off, in the adjoining parish,<sup>13</sup> in a large house near the sea. I cried bitterly at parting with my dear mistress and Miss Betsey, and when I kissed my mother and brothers and sisters, I thought my young heart would break, it pained me so. But there was no help; I was forced to go. Good Mrs Williams comforted me by saying that I should still be near the home I was about to quit, and might come over and see her and my kindred whenever I could obtain leave of absence from Mrs Pruden. A few hours after this I was taken to a strange house, and found myself among strange people. This separation seemed a sore trial to me then; but oh! 'twas light, light to the trials I have since endured! - 'twas nothing - nothing to be mentioned with them; but I was a child then, and it was according to my strength.<sup>14</sup>

I knew that Mrs Williams could no longer maintain me; that she was fain to part with me for my food and clothing; and I tried to submit myself to the change. My new mistress was a passionate woman; but yet she did not treat me very unkindly. I do not remember her striking me but once, and that was for going to see Mrs Williams when I heard she was sick, and staying longer than she had given me leave to do. All my employment at this time was nursing a sweet baby, little Master Daniel; and I grew so fond of my nursling that it was my greatest delight to walk out with him by the sea-shore, accompanied by his brother and sister, Miss Fanny and Master James. - Dear Miss Fanny! She was a sweet, kind young lady, and so fond of me that she

wished me to learn all that she knew herself; and her method of teaching me was as follows: - Directly she had said her lessons to her grandmamma, she used to come running to me, and make me repeat them one by one after her; and in a few months I was able not only to say my letters but to spell many small words. But this happy state was not to last long. Those days were too pleasant to last. My heart always softens when I think of them.

At this time Mrs Williams died. I was told suddenly of her death, and my grief was so great that, forgetting I had the baby in my arms, I ran away directly to my poor mistress's house; but reached it only in time to see the corpse carried out. Oh, that was a day of sorrow, - a heavy day! All the slaves cried. My mother cried and lamented her sore; and I (foolish creature!) vainly entreated them to bring my dear mistress back to life. I knew nothing rightly about death then, and it seemed a hard thing to bear. When I thought about my mistress I felt as if the world was all gone wrong; and for many days and weeks I could think of nothing else. I returned to Mrs Pruden's; but my sorrow was too great to be comforted, for my own dear mistress was always in my mind. Whether in the house or abroad, my thoughts were always talking to me about her.

I staid at Mrs Pruden's about three months after this; I was then sent back to Mr Williams to be sold. Oh, that was a sad sad time! I recollect the day well. Mrs Pruden came to me and said, 'Mary, you will have to go home directly; your master is going to be married, and he means to sell you and two of your sisters to raise money for the wedding.' Hearing this I burst out a crying, - though I was then far from being sensible of the full weight of my misfortune, or of the misery that waited for me. Besides, I did not like to leave Mrs Pruden, and the dear baby, who had grown very fond of me. For some time I could scarcely believe that Mrs Pruden was in earnest, till I received orders for my immediate return. - Dear Miss Fanny! how she cried at parting with me, whilst I kissed and hugged the baby, thinking I should never see him again. I left Mrs Pruden's, and walked home with a heart full of sorrow. The idea of being sold away from my mother and Miss Betsey was so frightful, that I dared not trust myself to think about it. We had been bought of Mr Myners, as I have

mentioned, by Miss Betsey's grandfather, and given to her, so that we were by right *her* property, and I never thought we should be separated or sold away from her.

When I reached the house, I went in directly to Miss Betsey. I found her in great distress; and she cried out as soon as she saw me, 'Oh, Mary! my father is going to sell you all to raise money to marry that wicked woman. You are *my* slaves, and he has no right to sell you; but it is all to please her.' She then told me that my mother was living with her father's sister at a house close by, and I went there to see her. It was a sorrowful meeting; and we lamented with a great and sore crying our unfortunate situation. 'Here comes one of my poor picaninnies!'<sup>15</sup> she said, the moment I came in, 'one of the poor slave-brood who are to be sold to-morrow.'

Oh dear! I cannot bear to think of that day, - it is too much. - It recalls the great grief that filled my heart, and the woeful thoughts that passed to and fro through my mind, whilst listening to the pitiful words of my poor mother, weeping for the loss of her children. I wish I could find words to tell you all I then felt and suffered. The great God above alone knows the thoughts of the poor slave's heart, and the bitter pains which follow such separations as these. All that we love taken away from us - Oh, it is sad, sad! and sore to be borne! - I got no sleep that night for thinking of the morrow; and dear Miss Betsey was scarcely less distressed. She could not bear to part with her old playmates, and she cried sore and would not be pacified.

The black morning at length came; it came too soon for my poor mother and us. Whilst she was putting on us the new osnaburgs<sup>16</sup> in which we were to be sold, she said, in a sorrowful voice, (I shall never forget it!) 'See, I am *sbrouding* my poor children; what a task for a mother!' - She then called Miss Betsey to take leave of us. 'I am going to carry my little chickens to market,' (these were her very words,) 'take your last look of them; may be you will see them no more.' 'Oh, my poor slaves! my own slaves!' said dear Miss Betsey, 'you belong to me; and it grieves my heart to part with you.' - Miss Betsey kissed us all, and, when she left us, my mother called the rest of the slaves to bid us good bye. One of them, a woman named Moll, came with her

infant in her arms. 'Ah!' said my mother, seeing her turn away and look at her child with the tears in her eyes, 'your turn will come next.' The slaves could say nothing to comfort us; they could only weep and lament with us. When I left my dear little brothers and the house in which I had been brought up, I thought my heart would burst.

Our mother, weeping as she went, called me away with the children Hannah and Dinah, and we took the road that led to Hamble Town,<sup>17</sup> which we reached about four o'clock in the afternoon. We followed my mother to the market-place, where she placed us in a row against a large house, with our backs to the wall and our arms folded across our breasts. I, as the eldest, stood first, Hannah next to me, then Dinah; and our mother stood beside, crying over us. My heart throbbed with grief and terror so violently, that I pressed my hands quite tightly across my breast, but I could not keep it still, and it continued to leap as though it would burst out of my body. But who cared for that? Did one of the many by-standers, who were looking at us so carelessly, think of the pain that wrung the hearts of the negro woman and her young ones? No, no! They were not all bad, I dare say, but slavery hardens white people's hearts towards the blacks; and many of them were not slow to make their remarks upon us aloud, without regard to our grief - though their light words fell like cayenne<sup>18</sup> on the fresh wounds of our hearts. Oh those white people have small hearts who can only feel for themselves.

At length the vendue master,<sup>19</sup> who was to offer us for sale like sheep or cattle, arrived, and asked my mother which was the eldest. She said nothing, but pointed to me. He took me by the hand, and led me out into the middle of the street, and, turning me slowly round, exposed me to the view of those who attended the vendue. I was soon surrounded by strange men, who examined and handled me in the same manner that a butcher would a calf or a lamb he was about to purchase, and who talked about my shape and size in like words - as if I could no more understand their meaning than the dumb beasts. I was then put up to sale. The bidding commenced at a few pounds, and gradually rose to fifty-seven,\* when I was knocked down to the

\* Bermuda currency; about £38 sterling.

highest bidder; and the people who stood by said that I had fetched a great sum for so young a slave.

I then saw my sisters led forth, and sold to different owners; so that we had not the sad satisfaction of being partners in bondage. When the sale was over, my mother hugged and kissed us, and mourned over us, begging of us to keep up a good heart, and do our duty to our new masters. It was a sad parting; one went one way, one another, and our poor mammy went home with nothing.\*

My new master was a Captain I—, who lived at Spanish Point.<sup>20</sup> After parting with my mother and sisters, I followed him to his store, and he gave me into the charge of his son, a lad about my own age, Master Benjy, who took me to my new home. I did not know where I was going, or what my new master would do with me. My heart was quite broken with grief, and my thoughts went back continually

\* Let the reader compare the above affecting account, taken down from the mouth of this negro woman, with the following description of a vendue of slaves at the Cape of Good Hope, published by me in 1826,<sup>21</sup> from the letter of a friend, — and mark their similarity in several characteristic circumstances. The resemblance is easily accounted for: slavery wherever it prevails produces similar effects. — ‘Having heard that there was to be a sale of cattle, farm stock, &c. by auction, at a Veld-Corner’s<sup>22</sup> in the vicinity, we halted our waggon one day for the purpose of procuring a fresh span of oxen. Among the stock of the farm sold, was a female slave and her three children. The two eldest children were girls, the one about thirteen years of age, and the other about eleven; the youngest was a boy. The whole family were exhibited together, but they were sold separately, and to different purchasers. The farmers examined them as if they had been so many head of cattle. While the sale was going on, the mother and her children were exhibited on a table, that they might be seen by the company, which was very large. There could not have been a finer subject for an able painter than this unhappy group. The tears, the anxiety, the anguish of the mother, while she met the gaze of the multitude, eyed the different countenances of the bidders, or cast a heart-rending look upon the children; and the simplicity and touching sorrow of the young ones, while they clung to their distracted parent, wiping their eyes, and half concealing their faces, — contrasted with the marked insensibility and jocular countenances of the spectators and purchasers, — furnished a striking commentary on the miseries of slavery, and its debasing effects upon the hearts of its abettors. While the woman was in this distressed situation she was asked, “Can you feed sheep?” Her reply was so indistinct that it escaped me; but it was probably in the negative, for her purchaser rejoined, in a loud and harsh voice, “Then I will teach you with the sjamboc,” (a whip made of the rhinoceros’ hide.) The mother and her three children were sold to three separate purchasers; and they were literally torn from each other.’ — *Ed.*

to those from whom I had been so suddenly parted. ‘Oh, my mother! my mother!’ I kept saying to myself, ‘Oh, my mammy and my sisters and my brothers, shall I never see you again!’

Oh, the trials! the trials! they make the salt water come into my eyes when I think of the days in which I was afflicted — the times that are gone; when I mourned and grieved with a young heart for those whom I loved.

It was night when I reached my new home. The house was large, and built at the bottom of a very high hill; but I could not see much of it that night. I saw too much of it afterwards. The stones and the timber were the best things in it; they were not so hard as the hearts of the owners.\*

Before I entered the house, two slave women, hired from another owner, who were at work in the yard, spoke to me, and asked who I belonged to? I replied, ‘I am come to live here.’ ‘Poor child, poor child!’ they both said; ‘you must keep a good heart, if you are to live here.’ — When I went in, I stood up crying in a corner. Mrs I— came and took off my hat, a little black silk hat Miss Pruden made for me, and said in a rough voice, ‘You are not come here to stand up in corners and cry, you are come here to work.’ She then put a child into my arms, and, tired as I was, I was forced instantly to take up my old occupation of a nurse. — I could not bear to look at my mistress, her countenance was so stern. She was a stout tall woman with a very dark complexion, and her brows were always drawn together into a frown. I thought of the words of the two slave women when I saw Mrs I—, and heard the harsh sound of her voice.

The person I took the most notice of that night was a French Black<sup>21</sup> called Hetty, whom my master took in privateering<sup>22</sup> from another vessel, and made his slave. She was the most active woman I ever saw, and she was tasked to her utmost. A few minutes after my arrival she came in from milking the cows, and put the sweet-potatoes on for supper. She then fetched home the sheep, and penned them in the fold; drove home the cattle, and staked them about the pond

\* These strong expressions, and all of a similar character in this little narrative, are given verbatim as uttered by Mary Prince. — *Ed.*



side;\* fed and rubbed down my master's horse, and gave the hog and the fed cow† their suppers; prepared the beds, and undressed the children, and laid them to sleep. I liked to look at her and watch all her doings, for her's was the only friendly face I had as yet seen, and I felt glad that she was there. She gave me my supper of potatoes and milk, and a blanket to sleep upon, which she spread for me in the passage before the door of Mrs I—'s chamber.

I got a sad fright, that night. I was just going to sleep, when I heard a noise in my mistress's room; and she presently called out to inquire if some work was finished that she had ordered Hetty to do. 'No, Ma'am, not yet,' was Hetty's answer from below. On hearing this, my master started up from his bed, and just as he was, in his shirt, ran down stairs with a long cow-skin‡ in his hand. I heard immediately after, the cracking of the thong, and the house rang to the shrieks of poor Hetty, who kept crying out, 'Oh, Massa! Massa! me dead. Massa! have mercy upon me — don't kill me outright.' — 'This was a sad beginning for me. I sat up upon my blanket, trembling with terror, like a frightened hound, and thinking that my turn would come next. At length the house became still, and I forget for a little while all my sorrows by falling fast asleep.

The next morning my mistress set about instructing me in my tasks. She taught me to do all sorts of household work; to wash and bake, pick cotton and wool, and wash floors, and cook. And she taught me (how can I ever forget it!) more things than these; she caused me to know the exact difference between the smart of the rope, the cart-whip, and the cow-skin, when applied to my naked body by her own cruel hand. And there was scarcely any punishment more dreadful than the blows I received on my face and head from her hard heavy fist. She was a fearful woman, and a savage mistress to her slaves.

There were two little slave boys in the house, on whom she vented her bad temper in a special manner. One of these children was a mulatto, called Cyrus,<sup>23</sup> who had been bought while an infant in his

\* The cattle on a small plantation in Bermuda are, it seems, often thus staked or tethered, both night and day, in situations where grass abounds.

† A cow fed for slaughter.

‡ A thong of hard twisted hide, known by this name in the West Indies.

mother's arms; the other, Jack, was an African from the coast of Guinea,<sup>24</sup> whom a sailor had given or sold to my master. Seldom a day passed without these boys receiving the most severe treatment, and often for no fault at all. Both my master and mistress seemed to think that they had a right to ill-use them at their pleasure; and very often accompanied their commands with blows, whether the children were behaving well or ill. I have seen their flesh ragged and raw with licks.<sup>25</sup> — Lick — lick — they were never secure one moment from a blow, and their lives were passed in continual fear. My mistress was not contented with using the whip, but often pinched their cheeks and arms in the most cruel manner. My pity for these poor boys was soon transferred to myself; for I was licked, and flogged, and pinched by her pitiless fingers in the neck and arms, exactly as they were. To strip me naked — to hang me up by the wrists and lay my flesh open with the cow-skin, was an ordinary punishment for even a slight offence. My mistress often robbed me too of the hours that belong to sleep. She used to sit up very late, frequently even until morning; and I had then to stand at a bench and wash during the greater part of the night, or pick wool and cotton; and often I have dropped down overcome by sleep and fatigue, till roused from a state of stupor by the whip, and forced to start up to my tasks.

Poor Hetty, my fellow slave, was very kind to me, and I used to call her my Aunt; but she led a most miserable life, and her death was hastened (at least the slaves all believed and said so,) by the dreadful chastisement she received from my master during her pregnancy.<sup>26</sup> It happened as follows. One of the cows had dragged the rope away from the stake to which Hetty had fastened it, and got loose. My master flew into a terrible passion, and ordered the poor creature to be stripped quite naked, notwithstanding her pregnancy, and to be tied up to a tree in the yard. He then flogged her as hard as he could lick, both with the whip and cow-skin, till she was all over streaming with blood. He rested, and then beat her again and again. Her shrieks were terrible. The consequence was that poor Hetty was brought to bed before her time, and was delivered after severe labour of a dead child. She appeared to recover after her confinement, so far that she was repeatedly flogged by both master and mistress afterwards; but

her former strength never returned to her. Ere long her body and limbs swelled to a great size; and she lay on a mat in the kitchen, till the water burst out of her body and she died. All the slaves said that death was a good thing for poor Hetty; but I cried very much for her death. The manner of it filled me with horror. I could not bear to think about it; yet it was always present to my mind for many a day.

After Hetty died all her labours fell upon me, in addition to my own. I had now to milk eleven cows every morning before sunrise, sitting among the damp weeds; to take care of the cattle as well as the children; and to do the work of the house. There was no end to my toils – no end to my blows. I lay down at night and rose up in the morning in fear and sorrow; and often wished that like poor Hetty I could escape from this cruel bondage and be at rest in the grave. But the hand of that God whom then I knew not, was stretched over me; and I was mercifully preserved for better things. It was then, however, my heavy lot to weep, weep, weep, and that for years; to pass from one misery to another, and from one cruel master to a worse. But I must go on with the thread of my story.

One day a heavy squall of wind and rain came on suddenly, and my mistress sent me round the corner of the house to empty a large earthen jar. The jar was already cracked with an old deep crack that divided it in the middle, and in turning it upside down to empty it, it parted in my hand. I could not help the accident, but I was dreadfully frightened, looking forward to a severe punishment. I ran crying to my mistress, 'O mistress, the jar has come in two.' 'You have broken it, have you?' she replied; 'come directly here to me.' I came trembling: she stripped and flogged me long and severely with the cow-skin; as long as she had strength to use the lash, for she did not give over till she was quite tired. – When my master came home at night, she told him of my fault; and oh, frightful! how he fell a swearing. After abusing me with every ill name he could think of, (too, too bad to speak in England,) and giving me several heavy blows with his hand, he said, 'I shall come home to-morrow morning at twelve, on purpose to give you a round hundred.' He kept his word – Oh sad for me! I cannot easily forget it. He tied me up upon a ladder, and gave me a hundred lashes with his own hand, and master Benjy stood by to

count them for him. When he had licked me for some time he sat down to take breath; then after resting, he beat me again and again, until he was quite wearied, and so hot (for the weather was very sultry), that he sank back in his chair, almost like to faint. While my mistress went to bring him drink, there was a dreadful earthquake. Part of the roof fell down, and every thing in the house went – clatter, clatter, clatter. Oh I thought the end of all things near at hand; and I was so sore with the flogging, that I scarcely cared whether I lived or died. The earth was groaning and shaking; every thing tumbling about; and my mistress and the slaves were shrieking and crying out, 'The earthquake! the earthquake!' It was an awful day for us all.

During the confusion I crawled away on my hands and knees, and laid myself down under the steps of the piazza, in front of the house. I was in a dreadful state – my body all blood and bruises, and I could not help moaning piteously. The other slaves, when they saw me, shook their heads and said, 'Poor child! poor child!' – I lay there till the morning, careless of what might happen, for life was very weak in me, and I wished more than ever to die. But when we are very young, death always seems a great way off, and it would not come that night to me. The next morning I was forced by my master to rise and go about my usual work, though my body and limbs were so stiff and sore, that I could not move without the greatest pain. – Nevertheless, even after all this severe punishment, I never heard the last of that jar; my mistress was always throwing it in my face.

Some little time after this, one of the cows got loose from the stake, and eat one of the sweet-potatoe slips.<sup>27</sup> I was milking when my master found it out. He came to me, and without any more ado, stooped down, and taking off his heavy boot, he struck me such a severe blow in the small of my back, that I shrieked with agony, and thought I was killed; and I feel a weakness in that part to this day. The cow was frightened at his violence, and kicked down the pail and spilt the milk all about. My master knew that this accident was his own fault, but he was so enraged that he seemed glad of an excuse to go on with his ill usage. I cannot remember how many licks he gave me then, but he beat me till I was unable to stand, and till he himself was weary.

After this I ran away and went to my mother, who was living with Mr Richard Darrel. My poor mother was both grieved and glad to see me; grieved because I had been so ill used, and glad because she had not seen me for a long, long while. She dared not receive me into the house, but she hid me up in a hole in the rocks near, and brought me food at night, after every body was asleep. My father, who lived at Crow-Lane, over the salt-water channel,<sup>28</sup> last heard of my being hid up in the cavern, and he came and took me back to my master. Oh I was loth, loth to go back; but as there was no remedy, I was obliged to submit.

When we got home, my poor father said to Capt. I—, 'Sir, I am sorry that my child should be forced to run away from her owner; but the treatment she has received is enough to break her heart. The sight of her wounds has nearly broke mine. — I entreat you, for the love of God, to forgive her for running away, and that you will be a kind master to her in future.' Capt. I— said I was used as well as I deserved, and that I ought to be punished for running away. I then took courage and said that I could stand the floggings no longer; that I was weary of my life, and therefore I had run away to my mother; but mothers could only weep and mourn over their children, they could not save them from cruel masters — from the whip, the rope, and the cow-skin. He told me to hold my tongue and go about my work, or he would find a way to settle me. He did not, however, flog me that day.

For five years after this I remained in his house, and almost daily received the same harsh treatment. At length he put me on board a sloop,<sup>29</sup> and to my great joy sent me away to Turk's Island.<sup>30</sup> I was not permitted to see my mother or father, or poor sisters and brothers, to say good bye, though going away to a strange land, and might never see them again. Oh the Buckra people<sup>31</sup> who keep slaves think that black people are like cattle, without natural affection. But my heart tells me it is far otherwise.

We were nearly four weeks on the voyage, which was unusually long. Sometimes we had a light breeze, sometimes a great calm, and the ship made no way; so that our provisions and water ran very low, and we were put upon short allowance. I should almost have been starved had it not been for the kindness of a black man called Anthony;

and his wife, who had brought their own victuals, and shared them with me.

When we went ashore at the Grand Quay,<sup>32</sup> the captain sent me to the house of my new master, Mr D—, to whom Captain I— had sold me. Grand Quay is a small town upon a sandbank; the houses low and built of wood. Such was my new master's. The first person I saw, on my arrival, was Mr D—, a stout sulky looking man, who carried me through the hall to show me to his wife and children. Next day I was put up by the vendue master to know how much I was worth, and I was valued at one hundred pounds currency.

My new master was one of the owners or holders of the salt ponds,<sup>33</sup> and he received a certain sum for every slave that worked upon his premises, whether they were young or old. This sum was allowed him out of the profits arising from the salt works. I was immediately sent to work in the salt water with the rest of the slaves. This work was perfectly new to me. I was given a half barrel and a shovel, and had to stand up to my knees in the water, from four o'clock in the morning till nine, when we were given some Indian corn<sup>34</sup> boiled in water, which we were obliged to swallow as fast as we could for fear the rain should come on and melt the salt. We were then called again to our tasks, and worked through the heat of the day; the sun flaming upon our heads like fire, and raising salt blisters in those parts which were not completely covered. Our feet and legs, from standing in the salt water for so many hours, soon became full of dreadful boils, which eat down in some cases to the very bone, afflicting the sufferers with great torment. We came home at twelve; ate our corn soup, called *blawly*, as fast as we could, and went back to our employment till dark at night. We then shovelled up the salt in large heaps, and went down to the sea, where we washed the pickle from our limbs, and cleaned the barrows and shovels from the salt. When we returned to the house, our master gave us each our allowance of raw Indian corn, which we pounded in a mortar and boiled in water for our suppers.

We slept in a long shed, divided into narrow slips, like the stalls used for cattle. Boards fixed upon stakes driven into the ground, without mat or covering, were our only beds. On Sundays, after we had washed the salt bags, and done other work required of us, we

went into the bush and cut the long soft grass, of which we made trusses<sup>35</sup> for our legs and feet to rest upon, for they were so full of the salt boils that we could get no rest lying upon the bare boards.

Though we worked from morning till night, there was no satisfying Mr D—. I hoped, when I left Capt. I—, that I should have been better off, but I found it was but going from one butcher to another. There was this difference between them: my former master used to beat me while raging and foaming with passion; Mr D— was usually quite calm. He would stand by and give orders for a slave to be cruelly whipped, and assist in the punishment, without moving a muscle of his face; walking about and taking snuff with the greatest composure. Nothing could touch his hard heart — neither sighs, nor tears, nor prayers, nor streaming blood; he was deaf to our cries, and careless of our sufferings. — Mr D— has often stripped me naked, hung me up by the wrists, and beat me with the cow-skin, with his own hand, till my body was raw with gashes. Yet there was nothing very remarkable in this; for it might serve as a sample of the common usage of the slaves on that horrible island.

Owing to the boils in my feet, I was unable to wheel the barrow fast through the sand, which got into the sores, and made me stumble at every step; and my master, having no pity for my sufferings from this cause, rendered them far more intolerable, by chastising me for not being able to move so fast as he wished me. Another of our employments was to row a little way off from the shore in a boat, and dive for large stones to build a wall round our master's house. This was very hard work; and the great waves breaking over us continually, made us often so giddy that we lost our footing, and were in danger of being drowned.

Ah, poor me! — my tasks were never ended. Sick or well, it was work — work — work! — After the diving season<sup>36</sup> was over, we were sent to the South Creek,<sup>37</sup> with large bills, to cut up mangoes to burn lime with.<sup>38</sup> Whilst one party of slaves were thus employed, another were sent to the other side of the island to break up coral out of the sea.

When we were ill, let our complaint be what it might, the only medicine given to us was a great bowl of hot salt water, with salt

mixed with it, which made us very sick. If we could not keep up with the rest of the gang of slaves, we were put in the stocks, and severely flogged the next morning. Yet, not the less, our master expected, after we had thus been kept from our rest, and our limbs rendered stiff and sore with ill usage, that we should still go through the ordinary tasks of the day all the same. — Sometimes we had to work all night, measuring salt to load a vessel; or turning a machine to draw water out of the sea for the salt-making. Then we had no sleep — no rest — but were forced to work as fast as we could, and go on again all next day the same as usual. Work — work — work — Oh! that Turk's Island was a horrible place! The people in England, I am sure, have never found out what is carried on there. Cruel, horrible place!

Mr D— had a slave called old Daniel, whom he used to treat in the most cruel manner. Poor Daniel was lame in the hip, and could not keep up with the rest of the slaves; and our master would order him to be stripped and laid down on the ground, and have him beaten with a rod of rough briar till his skin was quite red and raw. He would then call for a bucket of salt, and fling upon the raw flesh till the man writhed on the ground like a worm, and screamed aloud with agony. This poor man's wounds were never healed, and I have often seen them full of maggots, which increased his torments to an intolerable degree. He was an object of pity and terror to the whole gang of slaves, and in his wretched case we saw, each of us, our own lot, if we should live to be as old.

Oh the horrors of slavery! — How the thought of it pains my heart! But the truth ought to be told of it; and what my eyes have seen I think it is my duty to relate; for few people in England know what slavery is. I have been a slave — I have felt what a slave feels, and I know what a slave knows; and I would have all the good people in England to know it too, that they may break our chains, and set us free.

Mr D— had another slave called Ben. He being very hungry, stole a little rice one night after he came in from work, and cooked it for his supper. But his master soon discovered the theft; locked him up all night; and kept him without food till one o'clock the next day. He then hung Ben up by his hands, and beat him from time to time till

the slaves came in at night. We found the poor creature hung up when we came home; with a pool of blood beneath him, and our master still licking him. But this was not the worst. My master's son was in the habit of stealing the rice and rum. Ben had seen him do this, and thought he might do the same, and when master found out that Ben had stolen the rice and swore to punish him, he tried to excuse himself by saying that Master Dickey did the same thing every night. The lad denied it to his father, and was so angry with Ben for informing against him, that out of revenge he ran and got a bayonet, and whilst the poor wretch was suspended by his hands and writhing under his wounds, he run it quite through his foot. I was not by when he did it, but I saw the wound when I came home, and heard Ben tell the manner in which it was done.

I must say something more about this cruel son of a cruel father. — He had no heart — no fear of God; he had been brought up by a bad father in a bad path, and he delighted to follow in the same steps. There was a little old woman among the slaves called Sarah, who was nearly past work; and, Master Dickey being the overseer of the slaves<sup>39</sup> just then, this poor creature, who was subject to several bodily infirmities, and was not quite right in her head, did not wheel the barrow fast enough to please him. He threw her down on the ground, and after beating her severely, he took her up in his arms and flung her among the prickly-pear bushes,<sup>40</sup> which are all covered over with sharp venomous prickles. By this her naked flesh was so grievously wounded, that her body swelled and festered all over, and she died a few days after. In telling my own sorrows, I cannot pass by those of my fellow-slaves — for when I think of my own griefs, I remember theirs.

I think it was about ten years I had worked in the salt ponds at Turk's Island, when my master left off business, and retired to a house he had in Bermuda, leaving his son to succeed him in the island. He took me with him to wait upon his daughters; and I was joyful, for I was sick, sick of Turk's Island, and my heart yearned to see my native place again, my mother, and my kindred.

I had seen my poor mother during the time I was a slave in Turk's Island. One Sunday morning I was on the beach with some of the slaves, and we saw a sloop come in loaded with slaves to work in the

salt water.<sup>41</sup> We got a boat and went aboard. When I came upon the deck I asked the black people, 'Is there any one here for me?' 'Yes,' they said, 'your mother.' I thought they said this in jest — I could scarcely believe them for joy; but when I saw my poor mammy my joy was turned to sorrow, for she had gone from her senses. 'Mammy,' I said, 'is this you?' She did not know me. 'Mammy,' I said, 'what's the matter?' She began to talk foolishly, and said that she had been under the vessel's bottom. They had been overtaken by a violent storm at sea. My poor mother had never been on the sea before, and she was so ill, that she lost her senses, and it was long before she came quite to herself again. She had a sweet child with her — a little sister I had never seen, about four years of age, called Rebecca. I took her on shore with me, for I felt I should love her directly; and I kept her with me a week. Poor little thing! her's has been a sad life, and continues so to this day. My mother worked for some years on the island, but was taken back to Bermuda some time before my master carried me again thither.\*

After I left Turk's Island, I was told by some negroes that came over from it, that the poor slaves had built up a place with boughs and leaves, where they might meet for prayers, but the white people pulled it down twice, and would not allow them even a shed for prayers. A flood came down soon after and washed away many houses, filled the place with sand, and overflowed the ponds; and I do think that this was for their wickedness; for the Buckra men† there were very wicked. I saw and heard much that was very very bad at that place.

I was several years the slave of Mr D — after I returned to my native place. Here I worked in the grounds. My work was planting and

\* Of the subsequent lot of her relatives she can tell but little. She says, her father died while she and her mother were at Turk's Island; and that he had been long dead and buried before any of his children in Bermuda knew it, they being slaves on other estates. Her mother died after Mary went to Antigua. Of the fate of the rest of her kindred, seven brothers and three sisters, she knows nothing further than this — that the eldest sister, who had several children to her master, was taken by him to Trinidad; and that the youngest, Rebecca, is still alive, and in slavery in Bermuda. Mary herself is now about forty-three years of age. — *Ed.*

† Negro term for white people.

hoeing sweet-potatoes, Indian corn, plaintains,<sup>42</sup> bananas, cabbages, pumpkins, onions, &c. I did all the household work, and attended upon a horse and cow besides, — going also upon all errands. I had to curry the horse — to clean and feed him — and sometimes to ride him a little. I had more than enough to do — but still it was not so very bad as Turk's Island.

My old master often got drunk, and then he would get in a fury with his daughter, and beat her till she was not fit to be seen. I remember on one occasion, I had gone to fetch water, and when I was coming up the hill I heard a great screaming; I ran as fast as I could to the house, put down the water, and went into the chamber, where I found my master beating Miss D— dreadfully. I strove with all my strength to get her away from him; for she was all black and blue with bruises. He had beat her with his fist, and almost killed her. The people gave me credit for getting her away. He turned round and began to lick me. Then I said, 'Sir, this is not Turk's Island.' I can't repeat his answer, the words were too wicked — too bad to say. He wanted to treat me the same in Bermuda as he had done in Turk's Island.

He had an ugly fashion of stripping himself quite naked, and ordering me then to wash him in a tub of water. This was worse to me than all the licks. Sometimes when he called me to wash him I could not come, my eyes were so full of shame. He would then come to beat me. One time I had plates and knives in my hand, and I dropped both plates and knives, and some of the plates were broken. He struck me so severely for this, that at last I defended myself, for I thought it was high time to do so. I then told him I would not live longer with him, for he was a very indecent man — very spiteful, and too indecent; with no shame for his servants, no shame for his own flesh. So I went away to a neighbouring house and sat down and cried till the next morning, when I went home again, not knowing what else to do.

After that I was hired to work at Cedar Hills<sup>43</sup> and every Saturday night I paid the money to my master. I had plenty of work to do there — plenty of washing; but yet I made myself pretty comfortable. I earned two dollars and a quarter a week, which is twenty pence a day.

During the time I worked there, I heard that Mr John Wood was going to Antigua.<sup>44</sup> I felt a great wish to go there, and I went to Mr D—, and asked him to let me go in Mr Wood's service. Mr Wood did not then want to purchase me; it was my own fault that I came under him, I was so anxious to go. It was ordained to be, I suppose; God led me there. The truth is, I did not wish to be any longer the slave of my indecent master.

Mr Wood took me with him to Antigua, to the town of St John's,<sup>45</sup> where he lived. This was about fifteen years ago.<sup>46</sup> He did not then know whether I was to be sold; but Mrs Wood found that I could work, and she wanted to buy me. Her husband then wrote to my master to inquire whether I was to be sold? Mr D— wrote in reply, 'that I should not be sold to any one that would treat me ill.' It was strange he should say this, when he had treated me so ill himself. So I was purchased by Mr Wood for 300 dollars, (or £100 Bermuda currency.)\*

My work there was to attend the chambers and nurse the child, and to go down to the pond and wash clothes. But I soon fell ill of the rheumatism, and grew so very lame that I was forced to walk with a stick. I got the Saint Anthony's fire,<sup>47</sup> also, in my left leg, and became quite a cripple. No one cared much to come near me, and I was ill a long long time; for several months I could not lift the limb. I had to lie in a little old out-house, that was swarming with bugs and other vermin, which tormented me greatly; but I had no other place to lie in. I got the rheumatism by catching cold at the pond side, from washing in the fresh water; in the salt water I never got cold. The person who lived in next yard, (a Mrs Greene,) could not bear to hear my cries and groans. She was kind, and used to send an old slave woman to help me, who sometimes brought me a little soup. When the doctor found I was so ill, he said I must be put into a bath of hot water. The old slave got the bark of some bush that was good for the pains, which she boiled in the hot water, and every night she came and put me into the bath, and did what she could for me: I don't know what I should have done, or what would have become of me,

\* About £67. 10s. sterling.

had it not been for her. — My mistress, it is true, did send me a little food; but no one from our family came near me but the cook, who used to shove my food in at the door, and say, 'Molly, Molly, there's your dinner.' My mistress did not care to take any trouble about me; and if the Lord had not put it into the hearts of the neighbours to be kind to me, I must, I really think, have lain and died.

— It was a long time before I got well enough to work in the house. Mrs Wood, in the meanwhile, hired a mulatto woman to nurse the child; but she was such a fine lady she wanted to be mistress over me. I thought it very hard for a coloured woman to have rule over me because I was a slave and she was free. Her name was Martha Wilcox; she was a saucy woman, very saucy; and she went and complained of me, without cause, to my mistress, and made her angry with me. Mrs Wood told me that if I did not mind what I was about, she would get my master to strip me and give me fifty lashes: 'You have been used to the whip,' she said, 'and you shall have it here.' This was the first time she threatened to have me flogged; and she gave me the threatening so strong of what she would have done to me, that I thought I should have fallen down at her feet, I was so vexed and hurt by her words. The mulatto woman was rejoiced to have power to keep me down. She was constantly making mischief; there was no living for the slaves — no peace after she came.

I was also sent by Mrs Wood to be put in the Cage<sup>48</sup> one night, and was next morning flogged, by the magistrate's order, at her desire; and this all for a quarrel I had about a pig with another slave woman.<sup>49</sup> I was flogged on my naked back on this occasion: although I was in no fault after all; for old Justice Dyett, when we came before him, said that I was in the right, and ordered the pig to be given to me. This was about two or three years after I came to Antigua.

When we moved from the middle of the town to the Point,<sup>50</sup> I used to be in the house and do all the work and mind the children, though still very ill with the rheumatism. Every week I had to wash two large bundles of clothes, as much as a boy could help me to lift; but I could give no satisfaction. My mistress was always abusing and fretting after me. It is not possible to tell all her ill language. — One day she followed me foot after foot scolding and rating me. I bore in

silence a great deal of ill words: at last my heart was quite full, and I told her that she ought not to use me so; — that when I was ill I might have lain and died for what she cared; and no one would then come near me to nurse me, because they were afraid of my mistress. This was a great affront. She called her husband and told him what I had said. He flew into a passion: but did not beat me then; he only abused and swore at me; and then gave me a note and bade me go and look for an owner. Not that he meant to sell me; but he did this to please his wife and to frighten me. I went to Adam White, a cooper,<sup>51</sup> a free black, who had money, and asked him to buy me. He went directly to Mr Wood, but was informed that I was not to be sold. The next day my master whipped me.

Another time (about five years ago) my mistress got vexed with me, because I fell sick and I could not keep on with my work. She complained to her husband, and he sent me off again to look for an owner. I went to a Mr Burchell, showed him the note, and asked him to buy me for my own benefit; for I had saved about 100 dollars, and hoped, with a little help, to purchase my freedom. He accordingly went to my master: — 'Mr Wood,' he said, 'Molly has brought me a note that she wants an owner. If you intend to sell her, I may as well buy her as another.' My master put him off and said that he did not mean to sell me. I was very sorry at this, for I had no comfort with Mrs Wood, and I wished greatly to get my freedom.

The way in which I made my money was this. — When my master and mistress went from home, as they sometimes did, and left me to take care of the house and premises, I had a good deal of time to myself, and made the most of it. I took in washing, and sold coffee and yams and other provisions to the captains of ships. I did not sit still idling during the absence of my owners; for I wanted, by all honest means, to earn money to buy my freedom. Sometimes I bought a hog cheap on board ship, and sold it for double the money on shore; and I also earned a good deal by selling coffee. By this means I by degrees acquired a little cash. A gentleman also lent me some to help to buy my freedom — but when I could not get free he got it back again. His name was Captain Abbot.<sup>52</sup>

My master and mistress went on one occasion into the country, to

Date Hill, for change of air, and carried me with them to take charge of the children, and to do the work of the house. While I was in the country, I saw how the field negroes are worked in Antigua. They are worked very hard and fed but scantily. They are called out to work before daybreak, and come home after dark; and then each has to heave his bundle of grass for the cattle in the pen. Then, on Sunday morning, each slave has to go out and gather a large bundle of grass; and, when they bring it home, they have all to sit at the manager's door and wait till he come out: often they have to wait there till past eleven o'clock, without any breakfast. After that, those that have yams or potatoes, or fire-wood to sell, hasten to market to buy a dog's worth\* of salt fish,<sup>53</sup> or pork, which is a great treat for them. Some of them buy a little pickle out of the shad barrels,<sup>54</sup> which they call sauce, to season their yams and Indian corn. It is very wrong, I know, to work on Sunday or go to market; but will not God call the Buckra men to answer for this on the great day of judgment – since they will give the slaves no other day?

While we were at Date Hill Christmas came; and the slave woman who had the care of the place (which then belonged to Mr Roberts the marshal),<sup>55</sup> asked me to go with her to her husband's house, to a Methodist meeting<sup>56</sup> for prayer, at a plantation called Winthorps. I went; and they were the first prayers I ever understood. One woman prayed; and then they all sung a hymn; then there was another prayer and another hymn; and then they all spoke by turns of their own griefs as sinners. The husband of the woman I went with was a black driver.<sup>57</sup> His name was Henry. He confessed that he had treated the slaves very cruelly; but said that he was compelled to obey the orders of his master. He prayed them all to forgive him, and he prayed that God would forgive him. He said it was a horrid thing for a ranger† to have sometimes to beat his own wife or sister; but he must do so if ordered by his master.

I felt sorry for my sins also. I cried the whole night, but I was too

\* A dog is the 72nd part of a dollar.

† The head negro of an estate – a person who has the chief superintendence under the manager.

much ashamed to speak. I prayed God to forgive me. This meeting had a great impression on my mind, and led my spirit to the Moravian church,<sup>58</sup> so that when I got back to town, I went and prayed to have my name put down in the Missionaries' book; and I followed the church earnestly every opportunity.<sup>59</sup> I did not then tell my mistress about it; for I knew that she would not give me leave to go. But I felt I *must* go. Whenever I carried the children their lunch at school, I ran round and went to hear the teachers.

The Moravian ladies (Mrs Richter, Mrs Olufsen, and Mrs Sauter) taught me to read in the class; and I got on very fast. In this class there were all sorts of people, old and young, grey headed folks and children; but most of them were free people. After we had done spelling, we tried to read in the Bible. After the reading was over, the missionary gave out a hymn for us to sing. I dearly loved to go to the church, it was so solemn. I never knew rightly that I had much sin till I went there. When I found out that I was a great sinner, I was very sorely grieved, and very much frightened. I used to pray God to pardon my sins for Christ's sake, and forgive me for every thing I had done amiss; and when I went home to my work, I always thought about what I had heard from the missionaries, and wished to be good that I might go to heaven. After a while I was admitted a candidate for the holy Communion. – I had been baptized long before this, in the year 1817, by the Rev. Mr Curtin, of the English Church, after I had been taught to repeat the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. I wished at that time to attend a Sunday School taught by Mr Curtin, but he would not receive me without a written note from my master, granting his permission. I did not ask my owner's permission, from the belief that it would be refused; so that I got no farther instruction at that time from the English Church.\*

\* She possesses a copy of Mrs Trimmer's 'Charity School Spelling Book,' presented to her by the Rev. Mr Curtin, and dated August 30, 1817. In this book her name is written 'Mary, Princess of Wales' – an appellation which, she says, was given her by her owners. It is a common practice with the colonists to give ridiculous names of this description to their slaves; being, in fact, one of the numberless modes of expressing the habitual contempt with which they regard the negro race. – In printing this narrative we have retained Mary's paternal name of Prince. – *Ed.*



Some time after I began to attend the Moravian Church, I met with Daniel James, afterwards my dear husband. He was a carpenter and cooper to his trade; an honest, hard-working, decent black man, and a widower. He had purchased his freedom of his mistress, old Mrs Baker, with money he had earned whilst a slave. When he asked me to marry him, I took time to consider the matter over with myself, and would not say yes till he went to church with me and joined the Moravians. He was very industrious after he bought his freedom; and he had hired a comfortable house, and had convenient things about him. We were joined in marriage, about Christmas 1826, in the Moravian Chapel at Spring Gardens, by the Rev. Mr Olufsen.<sup>60</sup> We could not be married in the English Church. English marriage<sup>61</sup> is not allowed to slaves; and no free man can marry a slave woman.

When Mr Wood heard of my marriage, he flew into a great rage, and sent for Daniel, who was helping to build a house for his old mistress. Mr Wood asked him who gave him a right to marry a slave of his? My husband said, 'Sir, I am a free man, and thought I had a right to choose a wife; but if I had known Molly was not allowed to have a husband, I should not have asked her to marry me.' Mrs Wood was more vexed about my marriage than her husband. She could not forgive me for getting married, but stirred up Mr Wood to flog me dreadfully with the horsewhip. I thought it very hard to be whipped at my time of life for getting a husband – I told her so. She said that she would not have nigger men about the yards of premises, or allow a nigger man's clothes to be washed in the same tub where hers were washed. She was fearful, I think, that I should lose her time, in order to wash and do things for my husband; but I had then no time to wash for myself; I was obliged to put out my own clothes, though I was always at the wash-tub.

I had not much happiness in my marriage, owing to my being a slave. It made my husband sad to see me so ill-treated. Mrs Wood was always abusing me about him. She did not lick me herself, but she got her husband to do it for her, whilst she fretted the flesh off my bones. Yet for all this she would not sell me. She sold five slaves whilst I was with her; but though she was always finding fault with me, she would not part with me. However, Mr Wood afterwards

allowed Daniel to have a place to live in our yard, which we were very thankful for.

After this, I fell ill again with the rheumatism, and was sick a long time; but whether sick or well, I had my work to do. About this time I asked my master and mistress to let me buy my own freedom. With the help of Mr Burchell, I could have found the means to pay Mr Wood; for it was agreed that I should afterwards serve Mr Burchell a while, for the cash he was to advance for me. I was earnest in the request to my owners; but their hearts were hard – too hard to consent. Mrs Wood was very angry – she grew quite outrageous – she called me a black devil, and asked me who had put freedom into my head. 'To be free is very sweet,' I said: but she took good care to keep me a slave. I saw her change colour, and I left the room.

About this time my master and mistress were going to England to put their son to school, and bring their daughters home; and they took me with them to take care of the child. I was willing to come to England: I thought that by going there I should probably get cured of my rheumatism, and should return with my master and mistress, quite well, to my husband. My husband was willing for me to come away, for he had heard that my master would free me, – and I also hoped this might prove true; but it was all a false report.

The steward of the ship was very kind to me. He and my husband were in the same class in the Moravian Church. I was thankful that he was so friendly, for my mistress was not kind to me on the passage; and she told me, when she was angry, that she did not intend to treat me any better in England than in the West Indies – that I need not expect it. And she was as good as her word.

When we drew near to England, the rheumatism seized all my limbs worse than ever, and my body was dreadfully swelled. When we landed at the Tower,<sup>62</sup> I shewed my flesh to my mistress, but she took no great notice of it. We were obliged to stop at the tavern till my master got a house; and a day or two after, my mistress sent me down into the wash-house to learn to wash in the English way. In the West Indies we wash with cold water – in England with hot. I told my mistress I was afraid that putting my hands first into the hot water and then into the cold, would increase the pain in my limbs.

The doctor had told my mistress long before I came from the West Indies, that I was a sickly body and the washing did not agree with me. But Mrs Wood would not release me from the tub, so I was forced to do as I could. I grew worse, and could not stand to wash. I was then forced to sit down with the tub before me, and often through pain and weakness was reduced to kneel or to sit down on the floor, to finish my task. When I complained to my mistress of this, she only got into a passion as usual, and said washing in hot water could not hurt any one; — that I was lazy and insolent, and wanted to be free of my work; but that she would make me do it. I thought her very hard on me, and my heart rose up within me. However I kept still at that time, and went down again to wash the child's things; but the English washerwomen who were at work there, when they saw that I was so ill, had pity upon me and washed them for me.

After that, when we came up to live in Leigh Street,<sup>63</sup> Mrs Wood sorted out five bags of clothes which we had used at sea, and also such as had been worn since we came on shore, for me and the cook to wash. Elizabeth the cook told her, that she did not think that I was able to stand to the tub, and that she had better hire a woman. I also said myself, that I had come over to nurse the child, and that I was sorry I had come from Antigua, since mistress would work me so hard, without compassion for my rheumatism. Mr and Mrs Wood, when they heard this, rose up in a passion against me. They opened the door and bade me get out. But I was a stranger, and did not know one door in the street from another, and was unwilling to go away. They made a dreadful uproar, and from that day they constantly kept cursing and abusing me. I was obliged to wash, though I was very ill. Mrs Wood, indeed once hired a washerwoman, but she was not well treated, and would come no more.

My master quarrelled with me another time, about one of our great washings, his wife having stirred him up to do so. He said he would compel me to do the whole of the washing given out to me, or if I again refused, he would take a short course with me: he would either send me down to the brig<sup>64</sup> in the river, to carry me back to Antigua, or he would turn me at once out of doors, and let me provide for myself. I said I would willingly go back, if he would let me purchase

my own freedom. But this enraged him more than all the rest: he cursed and swore at me dreadfully, and said he would never sell my freedom — if I wished to be free, I was free in England,<sup>65</sup> and I might go and try what freedom would do for me, and be d—d. My heart was very sore with this treatment, but I had to go on. I continued to do my work, and did all I could to give satisfaction, but all would not do.

Shortly after, the cook left them, and then matters went on ten times worse. I always washed the child's clothes without being commanded to do it, and any thing else that was wanted in the family; though still I was very sick — very sick indeed. When the great washing came round, which was every two months, my mistress got together again a great many heavy things, such as bed-ticks,<sup>66</sup> bed-coverlets, &c. for me to wash. I told her I was too ill to wash such heavy things that day. She said, she supposed I thought myself a free woman, but I was not; and if I did not do it directly I should be instantly turned out of doors. I stood a long time before I could answer, for I did not know well what to do. I knew that I was free in England, but I did not know where to go, or how to get my living; and therefore, I did not like to leave the house. But Mr Wood said he would send for a constable to thrust me out; and at last I took course and resolved that I would not be longer thus treated, but would go and trust to Providence. This was the fourth time they had threatened to turn me out, and, go where I might, I was determined now to take them at their word; though I thought it very hard, after I had lived with them for thirteen years, and worked for them like a horse, to be driven out in this way, like a beggar. My only fault was being sick, and therefore unable to please my mistress, who thought she never could get work enough out of her slaves; and I told them so: but they only abused me and drove me out. This took place from two to three months, I think, after we came to England.

When I came away, I went to the man (one Mash) who used to black the shoes<sup>67</sup> of the family, and asked his wife to get somebody to go with me to Hatton Garden<sup>68</sup> to the Moravian Missionaries: these were the only persons I knew in England. The woman sent a young girl with me to the mission house, and I saw there a gentleman

called Mr Moore. I told him my whole story, and how my owners had treated me, and asked him to take in my trunk with what few clothes I had. The missionaries were very kind to me – they were sorry for my destitute situation, and gave me leave to bring my things to be placed under their care. They were very good people, and they told me to come to the church.

When I went back to Mr Wood's to get my trunk, I saw a lady, Mrs Pell, who was on a visit to my mistress. When Mr and Mrs Wood heard me come in, they set this lady to stop me, finding that they had gone too far with me. Mrs Pell came out to me, and said, 'Are you really going to leave, Molly? Don't leave, but come into the country with me.' I believe she said this because she thought Mrs Wood would easily get me back again. I replied to her, 'Ma'am, this is the fourth time my master and mistress have driven me out, or threatened to drive me – and I will give them no more occasion to bid me go. I was not willing to leave them, for I am a stranger in this country, but now I must go – I can stay no longer to be so used.' Mrs Pell then went up stairs to my mistress, and told that I would go, and that she could not stop me. Mrs Wood was very much hurt and frightened when she found I was determined to go out that day. She said, 'If she goes the people will rob her, and then turn her adrift.' She did not say this to me, but she spoke it loud enough for me to hear; that it might induce me not to go, I suppose. Mr Wood also asked me where I was going to. I told him where I had been, and that I should never have gone away had I not been driven out by my owners. He had given me a written paper some time before, which said that I had come with them to England by my own desire; and that was true. It said also that I left them of my own free will, because I was a free woman in England; and that I was idle and would not do my work – which was not true. I gave this paper afterwards to a gentleman who inquired into my case.\*<sup>69</sup>

I went into the kitchen and got my clothes out. The nurse and the servant girl were there, and I said to the man who was going to take out my trunk, 'Stop, before you take up this trunk, and hear what I

\* See page 24 [p. 39 of this edition].

have to say before these people. I am going out of this house, as I was ordered; but I have done no wrong at all to my owners, neither here nor in the West Indies. I always worked very hard to please them, both by night and day; but there was no giving satisfaction, for my mistress could never be satisfied with reasonable service. I told my mistress I was sick, and yet she has ordered me out of doors. This is the fourth time; and now I am going out.'

And so I came out, and went and carried my trunk to the Moravians. I then returned back to Mash the shoe-black's house, and begged his wife to take me in. I had a little West Indian money in my trunk; and they got it changed for me. This helped to support me for a little while. The man's wife was very kind to me. I was very sick, and she boiled nourishing things up for me. She also sent for a doctor to see me, and he sent me medicine, which did me good, though I was ill for a long time with the rheumatic pains. I lived a good many months with these poor people, and they nursed me, and did all that lay in their power to serve me. The man was well acquainted with my situation, as he used to go to and fro to Mr Wood's house to clean shoes and knives; and he and his wife were sorry for me.

About this time, a woman of the name of Hill told me of the Anti-Slavery Society, and went with me to their office, to inquire if they could do any thing to get me my freedom, and send me back to the West Indies. The gentlemen of the Society took me to a lawyer, who examined very strictly into my case; but told me that the laws of England could do nothing to make me free in Antigua.\* However they did all they could for me: they gave me a little money from time to time to keep me from want; and some of them went to Mr Wood to try to persuade him to let me return a free woman to my husband; but though they offered him, as I have heard, a large sum for my freedom, he was sulky and obstinate, and would not consent to let me go free.

This was the first winter I spent in England, and I suffered much

\* She came first to the Anti-Slavery Office in Aldermanbury,<sup>d</sup> about the latter end of November 1828; and her case was referred to Mr George Stephen<sup>e</sup> to be investigated. More of this hereafter. – Ed.

from the severe cold, and from the rheumatic pains, which still at times torment me. However, Providence was very good to me, and I got many friends – especially some Quaker ladies, who hearing of my case, came and sought me out, and gave me good warm clothing and money. Thus I had great cause to bless God in my affliction.

When I got better I was anxious to get some work to do, as I was unwilling to eat the bread of idleness.<sup>70</sup> Mrs Mash, who was a laundress, recommended me to a lady for a charwoman.<sup>71</sup> She paid me very handsomely for what work I did, and I divided the money with Mrs Mash; for though very poor, they gave me food when my own money was done, and never suffered me to want.

In the spring, I got into service with a lady, who saw me at the house where I sometimes worked as a charwoman. This lady's name was Mrs Forsyth. She had been in the West Indies, and was accustomed to Blacks, and liked them. I was with her six months, and went with her to Margate.<sup>72</sup> She treated me well, and gave me a good character<sup>73</sup> when she left London.\*

After Mrs Forsyth went away, I was again out of place, and went to lodgings, for which I paid two shillings a week, and found coals and candle.<sup>74</sup> After eleven weeks, the money I had saved in service was all gone, and I was forced to go back to the Anti-Slavery office to ask a supply, till I could get another situation. I did not like to go back – I did not like to be idle. I would rather work for my living than get it for nothing. They were very good to give me a supply, but I felt shame at being obliged to apply for relief whilst I had strength to work.

At last I went into the service of Mr and Mrs Pringle, where I have been ever since, and am as comfortable as I can be while separated from my dear husband, and away from my own country and all old friends and connections. My dear mistress teaches me daily to read the word of God, and takes great pains to make me understand it. I enjoy the great privilege of being enabled to attend church three times on the Sunday; and I have met with many kind friends since I have been here, both clergymen and others. The Rev. Mr Young, who lives

\* She refers to a written certificate which will be inserted afterwards.

in the next house, has shown me much kindness, and taken much pains to instruct me, particularly while my master and mistress were absent in Scotland.<sup>75</sup> Nor must I forget, among my friends, the Rev. Mr Mortimer, the good clergyman of the parish, under whose ministry I have now sat for upwards of twelve months. I trust in God I have profited by what I have heard from him. He never keeps back the truth, and I think he has been the means of opening my eyes and ears much better to understand the word of God. Mr Mortimer tells me that he cannot open the eyes of my heart, but that I must pray to God to change my heart, and make me to know the truth, and the truth will make me free.

I still live in the hope that God will find a way to give me my liberty, and give me back to my husband. I endeavour to keep down my fretting, and to leave all to Him, for he knows what is good for me better than I know myself. Yet, I must confess, I find it a hard and heavy task to do so.

I am often much vexed, and I feel great sorrow when I hear some people in this country say, that the slaves do not need better usage, and do not want to be free.\* They believe the foreign people,† who deceive them, and say slaves are happy. I say, Not so. How can slaves be happy when they have the halter round their neck and the whip upon their back? and are disgraced and thought no more of than beasts? – and are separated from their mothers, and husbands, and children, and sisters, just as cattle are sold and separated? Is it happiness for a driver in the field to take down his wife or sister or child, and strip them, and whip them in such a disgraceful manner? – women that have had children exposed in the open field to shame! There is no modesty or decency shown by the owner to his slaves; men, women, and children are exposed alike. Since I have been here I have often wondered how English people can go out into the West Indies and act in such a beastly manner. But when they go to the West Indies, they forget God and all feeling of shame, I think, since they can see

\* The whole of this paragraph especially, is given as nearly as was possible in Mary's precise words.<sup>f</sup>

† She means West Indians.<sup>g</sup>

and do such things. They tie up slaves like hogs – moor\* them up like cattle, and they lick them, so as hogs, or cattle, or horses never were flogged; – and yet they come home and say, and make some good people believe, that slaves don't want to get out of slavery. But they put a cloak about the truth. It is not so. All slaves want to be free – to be free is very sweet. I will say the truth to English people who may read this history that my good friend, Miss S—,<sup>76</sup> is now writing down for me. I have been a slave myself – I know what slaves feel – I can tell by myself what other slaves feel, and by what they have told me. The man that says slaves be quite happy in slavery – that they don't want to be free – that man is either ignorant or a lying person. I never heard a slave say so. I never heard a Buckra man say so, till I heard tell of it in England. Such people ought to be ashamed of themselves. They can't do without slaves, they say. What's the reason they can't do without slaves as well as in England? No slaves here – no whips – no stocks – no punishment, except for wicked people. They hire servants in England; and if they don't like them, they send them away: they can't lick them. Let them work ever so hard in England, they are far better off than slaves. If they get a bad master, they give warning and go hire to another. They have their liberty. That's just what *we* want. We don't mind hard work, if we had proper treatment, and proper wages like English servants, and proper time given in the week to keep us from breaking the Sabbath. But they won't give it: they will have work – work – work, night and day, sick or well, till we are quite done up;<sup>77</sup> and we must not speak up nor look amiss, however much we be abused. And then when we are quite done up, who cares for us, more than for a lame horse? This is slavery. I tell it, to let English people know the truth; and I hope they will never leave off to pray God, and call loud to the great King of England,<sup>78</sup> till all the poor blacks be given free, and slavery done up for evermore.

\* A West Indian phrase: to fasten or tie up.

SUPPLEMENT  
TO THE  
HISTORY OF MARY PRINCE  
BY THE EDITOR<sup>1</sup>

LEAVING Mary's narrative, for the present, without comment to the reader's reflections, I proceed to state some circumstances connected with her case which have fallen more particularly under my own notice, and which I consider it incumbent now to lay fully before the public.

About the latter end of November 1828, this poor woman found her way to the office of the Anti-Slavery Society in Aldermanbury, by the aid of a person who had become acquainted with her situation, and had advised her to apply there for advice and assistance. After some preliminary examination into the accuracy of the circumstances related by her, I went along with her to Mr George Stephen, solicitor and requested him to investigate and draw up a statement of her case, and have it submitted to counsel, in order to ascertain whether or not, under the circumstances, her freedom could be legally established on her return to Antigua. On this occasion, in Mr Stephen's presence and mine, she expressed, in very strong terms, her anxiety to return thither if she could go as a free person, and, at the same time, her extreme apprehensions of the fate that would probably await her if she returned as a slave. Her words were, 'I would rather go into my grave than go back a slave to Antigua, though I wish to go back to my husband very much – very much – very much! I am much afraid my owners would separate me from my husband, and use me very hard, or perhaps sell me for a field negro; – and slavery is too too bad. I would rather go into my grave!'

The paper which Mr Wood had given her before she left his house, was placed by her in Mr Stephen's hands. It was expressed in the following terms:–

in England as long as (please God) I shall live. I wish the King of England could know all I have told you. I wish it that he may see how cruelly we are used. We had no king in our country, or he would have stopt it. I think the king of England might stop it, and this is why I wish him to know it all. I have heard say he is good; and if he is, he will stop it if he can. I am well off myself, for I am well taken care of, and have good bed and good clothes; but I wish my own people to be as comfortable.'

## NOTES

### THE HISTORY OF MARY PRINCE

1. *the Supplement*: the editor, Thomas Pringle's Supplement, reprinted after the *History*.
2. *by a lady*: Susanna Strickland (1803-85), later Moodie, who wrote down Prince's *History*. *The Dictionary of National Biography* describes Strickland as an 'authoress' and wife of John Wedderburn Dunbar Moodie, a lieutenant in the Royal North British Fusiliers who spent ten years in South Africa. Strickland published numerous works including *Enthusiasm and Other Poems* (1831) and novels such as *The World Before Them* (1868) which was described by one reviewer as 'the handiwork of a sensible, amiable, refined and very religious lady'. The *DNB* does not mention Strickland's connection with the Anti-Slavery Society.
3. *Mr Joseph Phillips*: resident of Antigua and opponent of slavery, clerk of the Anti-Slavery Society. Phillips was the author of *The Outline of a Plan for the Total, Immediate and Safe Abolition of Slavery Throughout the British Colonies* (London, 1833) in which he calls for the abolition of enslavement by 1 July 1834, the abolition of corporal punishment in the colonies, a system of indenture for ex-slaves, universal employment, fixed working hours and the payment of wages to newly freed workers. He was imprisoned in Antigua for his activities on behalf of the Anti-Slavery Society: see 'Supplement', notes 25 and 6, pp. 83 and 86.
4. *the Anti-Slavery Society*: founded in 1823, its leading members were William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, Zachary Macaulay and James Stephen the Elder. It was not the first organized campaign against slavery in Britain: in 1787, William Wilberforce, acting on prime minister William Pitt's suggestion, formed the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and in 1831 radical members of the Anti-Slavery Society broke away to form the Agency Anti-Slavery Society. Thomas Pringle was appointed secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society in 1827.
5. *Mr George Stephen*: the solicitor consulted by Pringle on Prince's behalf.

Stephen also represented Pringle in the libel case that he brought against the publisher Thomas Cadell in February 1833. See 'Supplement', note 24, p. 82, and Introduction, 'The *History* and Libel Cases'.

6. *the interesting narrative of Asa-Asa*: reprinted at the end of the *History*, after Thomas Pringle's Supplement.

7. *Tho. Pringle*: Thomas Pringle (1789–1834), editor of *The History of Mary Prince*, Scottish poet and secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society from 1827 until his death in 1834. A contribution to James Hogg's *Poetic Mirror* in 1816 brought Pringle the friendship of Walter Scott, who assisted him when he decided to emigrate to South Africa in 1820 because of straitened circumstances. However, Pringle fell foul of the colonial authorities in South Africa when the two journals he established were suppressed by the governor, and he returned to London in 1826. In October 1826 he published an article on the slave trade in the *New Monthly Magazine*, a similar article appearing in the *Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter* on 31 January 1827 (see Appendix Four). His account of the 'misery and degradation' of South African slavery brought Pringle to the attention of prominent Abolitionist campaigners Zachary Macaulay and William Wilberforce, and led to his appointment as secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. His *African Sketches* (including his 'Narrative of a Residence in South Africa', published separately in 1835) was published in 1834, and it includes the poem 'Afar in the Desert', which Coleridge described as 'among the two or three most perfect lyric poems in our language'. Pringle first met Mary Prince in 1828 when she came to the headquarters of the Anti-Slavery Society in Aldermanbury, east London, and in 1829 he and his wife employed her as a domestic servant in their own household where she remained until at least 1833 (see Pringle's Supplement).

8. *SECOND EDITION*: I have not been able to locate the second edition. Copies of the first and third editions of the text are in Rhodes House, Oxford, and the British Library.

9. '*the stranger . . . within our gates*': Deuteronomy 14: 21: 'Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself, thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it unto an alien.' See also Deuteronomy 5: 14, Exodus 20: 10.

10. *Brackish-Pond, in Bermuda*: Bermuda, a group of islands in the North Atlantic Ocean covering only twenty-one square miles, has been a British Crown Colony since 1684. The first slaves were introduced into the islands in 1616, and they were mainly Africans and Native Americans who were put to work as servants, construction workers and sailors. In 1834, when the slaves were emancipated, out of a population of 9,000, nearly 5,000 were listed on the census as 'black' or 'coloured'. Bermuda is divided into parishes which

were named after the stockholders of the Virginia Company, the original colonizers of the island. Brackish Pond is in the parish of Devonshire.

11. *Crow-Lane*: a street in the city of Hamilton, the capital of Pembroke parish.

12. *household slave*: a slave who did not work on the plantations.

13. *in the adjoining parish*: parish of Pembroke to the east of Devonshire parish where Mary Prince was born.

14. *it was according to my strength*: see Joshua 14: 11: 'as my strength was then, even so is my strength now'.

15. '*Here comes one of my poor picanninies!*': *The Oxford English Dictionary* glosses *picanniny* as 'a little one', 'a child'; the term (which now gives offence when used by people of European extraction) refers in the Caribbean and America to people of black African ethnic origin; in South and Central America to aboriginal peoples.

16. *osnaburg*: a kind of coarse linen originally made in Osnabruck, a town in North Germany.

17. *Hamble Town*: Hamilton, the capital city of the parish of Pembroke.

18. *cayenne*: pungent powder obtained from the dried and ground pods and seeds of various species of capsicum from southern America.

19. *vendue master*: the organizer of a slave market (a *vendue* is a public sale or auction). In *The Interesting Narrative of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (London, 1794; ed. Vincent Carretta, New York: Penguin, 1995), Olaudah Equiano describes the horrors of the slave market where he was put up for sale in Barbados. 'In this manner, without scruple, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again,' he writes, and he rebukes 'nominal Christians' for their inhumane treatment of Africans (p. 60). His sense of outrage here is more palpable than Mary Prince's. Thomas Pringle also describes a slave market in his poem 'The Bechuana Boy' (see Appendix One).

20. *Spanish Point*: in the parish of Pembroke, at the westernmost tip of the island.

21. *a French Black*: i.e. from one of the French colonies in Africa.

22. *privateering*: a privateer is an armed vessel owned and commanded by private persons holding a commission from a government authorizing its owners to use it against a hostile nation, especially in the capture of merchant shipping.

23. *a mulatto, called Cyrus*: Cyrus the Elder (559–529 BC) was the founder of the Persian Empire, and Cyrus the Younger (c. 430–401 BC) held high command in Asia Minor during the Peloponnesian War. In one of his footnotes to the *History*, Pringle notes the planters' custom of giving slaves exaggeratedly grand

or dignified names, presumably as a means of humiliation. See Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* (p. 64) for a description of his renaming and his refusal at first to take the name of Gustavus Vasa of Sweden.

24. *Guinea*: country on the west coast of Africa.

25. *licks*: blows with a whip.

26. *during her pregnancy*: sexual relations between male slave owners and female slaves were common. Mary Prince does not give the details of Hetty's pregnancy, nor does she describe her own sexual relations with her subsequent master Mr D—, although it is possible to infer this from her narrative. In evidence given at the libel case which Wood brought against Pringle in March 1833, Prince says that she lived with a Captain Abbot for seven years, and their relationship was obviously a sexual one, for when Prince found another woman in bed with him she 'licked' (whipped) her. Prince left the Moravian Society because of her liaison with Abbot, and she also says that she lived with a freeman, Oyskman, who promised to make her free. She says that she narrated all these details to Susanna Strickland, but they were not written down. See *The Times*, 1 March 1833 (reprinted in Appendix Three). Such censorship was probably a concession to the moral sensibilities of Christian readers of the *History*, and in her edition of the *History* (London: Pandora, 1987, p. 3) Moira Ferguson suggests that Prince 'encodes' her sexual experience in order to foster the impression that she is pure, Christian and innocent. Mary Prince's *History* contrasts in this respect with the African-American Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), which is much more sexually explicit.

27. *sweet-potatoe slips*: possibly a soft, semi-liquid mass made of sweet potatoes, from 'slop', semi-liquid food of a weak unappetizing kind.

28. *the salt-water channel*: a channel cut so that salt could be collected in the salt pans.

29. *sloop*: a small, one-masted vessel.

30. *Turk's Island*: the Turks and Caicos Islands lie 900 miles south east of Bermuda, 575 miles south east of Miami, Florida, directly east of Inagua at the southernmost tip of the Bahamas, and north of Hispaniola. They consist of two groups of about forty low-lying islands and cays (sand banks) covering 193 square miles and surrounded by one of the longest coral reefs in the world. The Turks Islands consist of two inhabited islands, Grand Turk and Salt Cay, six inhabited cays and a large number of rocks (see Paul G. Boulton, *Turks and Caicos Islands*, Oxford: Clio Press, 1991). It is probable that when Prince refers to 'Turks Island', she is talking about Grand Turk.

Apparently named after the giant 'turk's head' cactus which grows there, the islands were 'discovered' in 1512. European salt-rakers were the first to

inhabit the islands, establishing plantations there and only leaving the area after Abolition in the 1830s. In the early eighteenth century, both the Bahamians and the Bermudans asserted their rights to the Turks and Caicos Islands, but Bermuda was prevented from colonizing the islands because of its own status as a colony. The islanders resisted Bahamian attempts at integration, but at the beginning of the nineteenth century the islands were incorporated into the Bahamas colony. The Turks and Caicos Islands became a separate colony in 1848. For a contemporary description of the islands see Daniel McKinnen, *A Tour Through the British West Indies, in the Years 1802 and 1803* (London, 1804), pp. 121-9.

31. *the Buckra people*: the *OED* identifies the word as deriving from Black patois of Surinam, *backra*, master, and glosses it as 'white man (in Black speech)'.  
 32. *Grand Quay*: Prince means Grand Turk, the largest inhabited island of the Turks and Caicos Islands (see note 30, above). It is unclear, though, which settlement she means when she refers (two lines later) to the 'small town' of Grand Quay.

33. *the salt ponds*: The salt industry remained the economic mainstay of the Turks Islands until the 1960s. In the eighteenth century imported slaves were put to work raking in the salt ponds, and the harvested salt was then traded north up the American coast in return for money and food. Daniel McKinnen gives the following description of the salt industry in the Turks Islands:

Early in the year, when the power of the sun begins to increase, accompanied with dry weather, the salt every where in these natural ponds begins to crystallize and subside in solid cakes. It remains then only to break the crystals, and rake the salt on shore; and by this easy mode a single labourer may rake from forty to sixty bushels of salt in a day. The process, however, is facilitated by making small pans, which as the salt is taken out, may be replenished with brine from the pond [McKinnen, 124].

See also Howard Johnson's *The Bahamas in Slavery and Freedom* (Kingston, Jamaica: Randle Publishers, 1991), which contains the following contemporary description of salt-raking on the Turks Islands by Governor John Gregory which corroborates Prince's account of her pain and discomfort:

It must be borne in mind that the labour of salt-raking is most distasteful to the Negro; as well as the White man, involving the most painful Exposure of the face to the Sun and Mosquitoes and the most distressing Effects upon the feet from constant immersion in brine. In fact, no man will voluntarily submit to it, Except under the stimulus of very high wages [Johnson, 74-5].

34. *Indian corn*: maize.



35. *trusses*: bundles of hay or straw.
36. *the diving season*: i.e. diving for stones in the manner Prince has just described.
37. *South Creek*: an area in the south of Grand Turk island, comprising lagoons and red mangroves.
38. *large bills, to cut up mangoes to burn lime with*: the 'bills' Prince refers to here may have been hoes or chopping instruments, and mangoes were evidently used as fuel with which to burn limestone to produce lime or quick lime, which was used in the manufacture of mortar or cement, or as a manure.
39. *the overseer of the slaves*: a superintendent of the slaves.
40. *prickly-pear bushes*: prickly pear is a cactus with edible pear-shaped fruit.
41. *a sloop . . . loaded with slaves to work in the salt water*: slaves from Bermuda were shipped to the Turks Islands to rake salt.
42. *plantain*: long, pod-shaped, cucumber-like fleshy fruit, closely allied to the banana (*OED*).
43. *Cedar Hills*: Prince may be referring to what is now Cedar Grove, a town in the north of the island.
44. *Antigua*: one of the Windward Islands, located between the Atlantic and the Caribbean. 'Discovered' in 1493 by Columbus, it was settled by British people from St Christopher's in 1632, and after a brief French occupation between 1666 and 1667 it became a British colony. In 1671 it became one of the newly created Leeward Islands until the formation of the West India Federation in 1958. For contemporary descriptions of the island, see Mrs Flanighan, *Antigua and the Antiguans; a Full Account of the Colony and Its Inhabitants from the Time of the Caribs to the Present Day*, 2 vols (London, 1844), Bryan Edwards, *The History, Civil and Commercial, of the British West Indies*, 5 vols, 5th edn (London, 1819) and Daniel McKinnen, *A Tour Through the British West Indies*. According to McKinnen, in 1774 the population was estimated at 2,590 white people and 37,808 slaves, while in 1787 the figures had increased to 5,000 white people and 45,000 'negroes and people of colour' (although he thinks that the latter might be an over-estimate; see McKinnen, 75).
45. *the town of St John's*: the capital of Antigua, on the north-west coast of the island. The town is on a hill, and according to McKinnen's estimate at the beginning of the nineteenth century it contained around 1,800 houses.
46. *about fifteen years ago*: i.e. when Mary Prince was twenty-eight years old.
47. *Saint Anthony's fire*: the entry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of 1773 describes erysipelas or St Anthony's fire as an eruptive fever which may affect any part of the body but which usually attacks the face (Prince tells us that her leg is affected). Symptoms include chilliness, shivering and fever, the body

- part swells up into red pustules and blisters which eventually turn yellow or black and blue. It is a serious, sometimes fatal, condition as the affected body part can turn gangrenous, and a leg may swell to three times its normal size. Cures include blood letting and administering purging potions, and the *Encyclopaedia* advises the patient to consume water-gruel, barley broth and roasted apples (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 3 vols, 1773, vol. III, 'Medicine', 'Of the Erysipelas, or St. Anthony's Fire').
48. *the Cage*: the *OED* describes this as a 'prison for petty malefactors; a lock-up (obs.)'.
49. *a quarrel I had about a pig with another slave woman*: Prince mentions this quarrel in her evidence at the libel trial against Pringle: 'Witness was . . . before the justice about beating a female slave, respecting a pig. Witness did not beat the woman, but she was punished as though she did.' See *The Times*, 1 March 1833 (Appendix Three).
50. *the Point*: located on the coast of St John's, on the bay.
51. *cooper*: craftsman who makes and repairs wooden vessels (e.g. barrels).
52. *Captain Abbot*: in the evidence that she gave at the libel trial against Pringle in March 1833, Prince claimed that she lived with Captain Abbot for seven years, although apparently '[s]he did not live in the house with him, but slept with him sometimes in another hut'. See *The Times*, 1 March 1833 (Appendix Three).
53. *salt fish*: dried fish preserved in salt.
54. *shad barrels*: barrels used for storing fish.
55. *marshal*: an officer in a court of law.
56. *a Methodist meeting*: Methodism, the Christian sect founded by John and Charles Wesley at Oxford in 1729, was an evangelistic movement led by the Wesleys and George Whitfield. Like the Moravians, they had a strong missionary project, and John Wesley published an early Abolitionist polemic, *Thoughts Upon Slavery*, in 1774. Methodism was first established in Antigua in 1760 by Nathaniel Gilbert, who had met John Wesley in England. John Baxter, a shipwright from England, was another prominent Methodist who revived the community when he arrived in Antigua in 1778. He supervised the building of a Methodist chapel in St John's in which he preached his first sermon in 1783. In 1788 there were 2,000 members of the society, and by 1802 this figure had doubled. After Baxter's death in 1805, Methodism spread to other Caribbean islands, although Antigua continued to be regarded as the parent island. 'Thus,' writes Mrs Flanighan, 'from a small beginning - from a few black slaves gathered together by night beneath the roof of a white man - this society has spread far and wide, like some huge wave, until now it boasts a vast increase of number, of every variety and shade, from the

ruddy sons of Britain, down to the jetty offspring of Afric's soil' (I: 240-48).  
57. *a black driver*: a black slave driver.

58. *Moravian church*: A Protestant sect established in Lusitania, Upper Saxony, which has been called the first international Protestant church. The Moravians were descendants of Unitas Fratrum, the Church of Bohemian Brethren founded by a group of Hussites from 1457 and suppressed in Bohemia and Moravia in the 1620s (see Introduction).

In his *Narrative of a Residence in South Africa* (London, 1835), Thomas Pringle describes the ordered lifestyle of Moravian missionaries, but he comments on 'the peculiar and rather monastic regulations which are observed in their European establishments'. Mrs Flanighan describes the growing popularity of the Moravian mission in Antigua in the eighteenth century, and she comments also on the simplicity and openness of the Moravians (I: 254-61 and Introduction). However, Eric Williams points out that '[t]he Moravian missionaries in the islands held slaves without hesitation'. See *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University Press of North Carolina, 1994), p. 43.

59. *I followed the church earnestly every opportunity*: religious conversion and spiritual regeneration are stock features of eighteenth-century slave narratives such as Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative* and Ukawsaw Gronniosaw's *Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronniosaw, an African Prince, As Related By Himself* (c. 1770, Leeds, 1810). Mary Prince emphasizes her religious conversion, possibly because the widespread (and mistaken) belief that baptism would set a slave free may still have persisted in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century. See Peter Fryer, *Staying Power. The History of Black People in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), pp. 114-15.

60. *We were joined in marriage . . . by the Rev. Mr Olufsen*: there is no record of Mary Prince's marriage to Daniel James in the 'Spring Gardens Banns of Marriage 1826' at the Moravian Archive in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, but a 'J. Olufsen' was the officiating minister at a marriage between two slaves, 'Elias and Amy', on 13 September 1827, which would seem to corroborate the details Prince gives here: The unusual spelling of Olufsen in both the 'Spring Gardens Marriage Banns 1827-1834' and in Prince's *History* might suggest that she had a marriage certificate from which she or Pringle misread the name. However, the petition presented to Parliament in 1829 states that Prince and James were married by a Moravian minister called Mr Ellensen (see Appendix Two).

Spring Gardens Moravian church in St John's, Antigua, is still located on St John's Street. In *Antigua and the Antiguans*, Mrs Flanighan gives the following description of the church: 'The settlement of St John's is situated

in Spring Gardens, at the extreme north end of the town, and looks the very picture of neatness and domestic comfort. The present chapel, erected in 1773, is a plain building, devoid of any great architectural beauty, it is true, but interesting from its very simplicity, and from being built by the negroes in times of slavery' (I: 250).

61. *English marriage*: prohibited to slaves in the Anglican church, but permitted in non-conformist churches.

62. *the Tower*: i.e. the Tower of London.

63. *Leigh Street*: in Bloomsbury, central London, near Tavistock Square and Gordon Square.

64. *brig*: slave ship, a vessel with two masts.

65. *I was free in England*: Mary Prince is aware of her legal rights: under English law, slaves were free as long as they remained in England, but they resumed their slave status as soon as they returned to the colonies. See Introduction, 'The Black Community and the Law'.

66. *bed-ticks*: large, flat, quadrangular bag or case stuffed with feathers, hair, straw, chaff, etc. to form a mattress.

67. *black the shoes*: i.e. polish the shoes.

68. *Hatton Garden*: in central London, between High Holborn and Clerkenwell, parallel to Gray's Inn Road. The Wesleyan Missionary Society was located at 77 Hatton Garden.

69. *a gentleman who inquired into my case*: i.e. Thomas Pringle.

70. *to eat the bread of idleness*: Proverbs 31: 27: 'She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.'

71. *charwoman*: woman hired to do odd jobs and cleaning in the household.

72. *Margate*: on the north coast of Kent, near Canterbury.

73. *gave me a good character*: i.e. a reference, which Pringle includes in his Supplement.

74. *found coals and candle*: i.e. provided her own heating and lighting.

75. *absent in Scotland*: Thomas Pringle and his wife Margaret were both Scottish.

76. *Miss S—*: Susanna Strickland.

77. *done up*: (colloquial) finished, exhausted.

78. *the great King of England*: King William IV (1830-37). Eric Williams notes that 'the royal Duke of Clarence, the future William IV, "took up the cudgills" against abolition and attacked Wilberforce as either a fanatic or a hypocrite' in 1793. George III was also an opponent of abolition. See Williams, 39.

## Notes on the Footnotes

- a. *the following description . . . published by me in 1826*: Pringle is referring to his article on the South African slave trade published in the *New Monthly Magazine* (see note 7, above). The extract Pringle includes here is taken from a letter he received from a friend.
- b. *at a Veld-Cornet's*: i.e. field-cornet, 'the magistrate of a township in Cape Colony' (*OED*).
- c. *Mrs Trimmer's 'Charity School Spelling Book'*: Sarah Trimmer (1741-1810), educational and children's writer, and the author of instructive and religious works, including *The Charity School Spelling Book . . . in Words of One Syllable Only*, 5th edn (1799).
- d. *the Anti-Slavery Office in Aldermanbury*: headquarters of the Anti-Slavery Society in east London, off Cheapside.
- e. *Mr George Stephen*: see note 5, above.
- f. *the whole of this paragraph . . . Mary's precise words*: there is a notable shift in register from this point onwards, and the contrast gives an indication of the grammatical and syntactical interventions Pringle may have made in editing Mary Prince's narrative.
- g. *West Indians*: i.e. white West Indians. For examples of the sort of anti-Abolition polemic to which Prince may be referring, see Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica: or, a General Survey of the Antient and Modern State of that Island*, 3 vols (London, 1774), and his *Candid Reflections Upon the Judgement Lately Awarded . . . on what is commonly called the Negroe-Cause, by a Planter* (London, 1772).

## SUPPLEMENT TO THE HISTORY OF MARY PRINCE

- i. *THE EDITOR*: Thomas Pringle.
2. *the Anti-Slavery Committee*: see Introduction, 'The Anti-Slavery Society and Thomas Pringle', Reginald Coupland, *The British Anti-Slavery Movement* (London: Butterworth, 1933), p. 137, and Christine Bolt, *The Anti-Slavery Movement and Reconstruction. A Study of Anglo-American Co-operation 1833-77* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 5.
3. *Dr Lushington and Mr Sergeant Stephen*: Stephen Lushington (1782-1873), Member of Parliament and reformer. The *DNB* records that in March 1824 Lushington supported the introduction of Canning's bill for the 'more effectual suppression of the African Slave trade', and on 12 June 1827 he presented several petitions from 'people of colour in the West Indies' and urged that

they be given full legal protection. Sir James Stephen (1789-1850) ('Sergeant' in this context means lawyer) was the colonial under-secretary responsible for drawing up the Abolition Bill of 1833. He was a regular contributor to the *Edinburgh Review*, and his first article in April 1838 was on William Wilberforce.

4. *bringing the case under the notice of Parliament*: a petition was presented to Parliament on Mary Prince's behalf of 24 June 1829. See Appendix Two for a report.

5. *a Bill . . . with the owner's consent*: See Introduction, 'The Black Community and the Law', for existing law.

6. *Mr Manning*: Mr Manning gave evidence at the libel trial in March 1833, where he 'stated that he had a correspondence with the plaintiff [i.e. Wood] respecting Mary Prince. The plaintiff was disposed, on certain conditions, to manumit her, but did not wish to be driven to it by the interference of others' (*The Times*, 1 March 1833).

7. *the Session*: the parliamentary session or term.

8. *William Allen, of the Society of Friends*: William Allen (1770-1843), philanthropist, scientist and lifelong member of the Quaker movement. Interested from boyhood in the movement to abolish the slave trade, he became friends with prominent abolitionists Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce in the 1790s. After the abolition of the slave trade he became an active member of the African Institution, continuing the campaign to abolish slavery.

9. *Sir Patrick Ross, the Governor of the Colony*: Mrs Flanighan's *Antigua and the Antiguans* gives the following account of Ross: 'Sir Benjamin D'Urban being recalled, Sir Patrick Ross was appointed governor and commander-in-chief. His excellency arrived in Antigua in the year 1826, and during his stay there, ingratiated himself with the *heads of the island*, by his courteous manners, and his humane desire to spare their feelings upon the all-engrossing topic of approaching emancipation' (I: 146). It was indeed a turbulent time on the island, and Flanighan reports a 'negro insurrection' in 1831, a year before Ross retired as governor.

10. *I induced her to take a husband*: this of course directly contradicts Prince's account of her marriage.

11. *a quarrel with another female*: Wood is referring to the dispute described by Prince in the evidence she gave at the libel trial of March 1833. See Introduction, 'The History and Libel Cases'.

12. *the Consolidated Slave Law*: parliamentary acts passed in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries affirmed the need 'to consolidate and amend all the laws relating to slaves'. See Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, vol. XV (1827), pp. 1284-1366.