THE MEMOIRS
OF
PÈRE LABAT
1693–1705

Translated and Abridged by
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With an Introduction by
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There is a very ancient law to the effect that if any man in the Kingdom of Sennar, subject to the King of Omdurman, killed a Christian, he had to pay the greatest difficulty in obtaining the possession of the ownership of slaves. Finally, it was decided to permit the Negroes in the Island of Africa, which is owned by the English, to make slaves of this kind. The negroes in the Island of Africa, which is owned by the English, are authorized to make slaves of the English negroes. But such trade has very often caused considerable difficulties in parts of Africa, and as such dealings have been made in the Island of Africa, the negroes are not allowed to the English, nor to the negroes of Africa, to own or take slaves in Africa. In times of peace we also obtain pay a large revenue from the negroes of Africa.
SLAVES, AGENTS, AND INTERLOPERS

A large ship that was engaged in the slave trade had recently returned to London. The ship's cargo was composed of thousands of slaves, who were purchased in different parts of the African continent. The ship's agent, a wealthy merchant, had made substantial profits from the sale of these human commodities. He was known for his ruthless business tactics and had a reputation for exploiting the vulnerable position of the enslaved individuals.

Upon the arrival of the ship, the agent proceeded to unload the cargo at a facility in London. The slaves were then sorted and categorized based on their age, gender, and physical condition. The agent ensured that the slaves were well cared for and maintained in good health. He was determined to maximize the profitability of his venture.

The agent had arranged for a large number of buyers to attend the slave auction. The buyers, who were predominantly from various European countries, were enthusiastic about acquiring slaves for their personal or commercial use. The agent had meticulously prepared the slaves for presentation, ensuring that they appeared healthy and attractive.

The auction proceeded in an orderly manner, with each slave being introduced and displayed to the buyers. The agent was skilled in manipulating the buyers, often using his charm and persuasive skills to secure the highest bids. He was known for his ability to read the financial status and interests of the buyers, often steering them towards his favored candidates.

As the auction concluded, the agent's profits were substantial. He had successfully sold all the slaves, earning a significant sum. He was pleased with the outcome and confidently looked forward to future endeavors in the slave trade. He knew that the demand for enslaved individuals would continue to grow, and his business was well-positioned to capitalize on this trend.
companies' vessels, which have the right to capture her as if she belonged to an enemy nation. Such ships are called Interlopers and they are always well armed. When they have finished their trade on the African coast, they come to the Islands to sell their slaves. They have to be most careful, however, and take all precautions to avoid capture and confiscation. Several Englishmen have assured me that the slaves cannot be seized once they have been landed and have crossed the fifty paces reserved by the King round the coast of their islands, nor can the purchasers of slaves from interlopers be legally troubled. I do not say that this is true although I learnt it from the English themselves, and it certainly would be most convenient. The French do not enjoy any such rights and the interlopers are always very much on their guard. The interlopers suspect everyone, and therefore they allow no ship to approach unless she give the signal that has been arranged with their shore agents and which is altered every voyage.

The interlopers sell their slaves at a cheaper rate than the companies, so people prefer to buy slaves from them, although there is a certain amount of risk to the purchaser. Since, however, there is a remedy for everything except death, and methods have been found to tame the fiercest animals, the English, who are a very clever people, have made the agents of their companies quite human. The French, who pride themselves in their ability to copy all that they see done by other nations, have imitated them, and have taught their agents to be the most obliging and honest people in the world. It is only necessary to make an arrangement with the agents and then everyone is happy, except perhaps people who have shares in the company. It is true that these agents do make an occasional capture in order to keep their employment and enjoy the trust of the companies, but in this one remarks their prudence, for they never seize any but bad or rejected slaves, or discover what ships have brought them, or know the names of the buyers.
I had been six months in Martinique before I had opportunity to satisfy my curiosity about the Caribs. They often visited our Villages but I was never there when they came. At last M. Michel, one of my neighbours at Albouy’s, told me that some Caribs, men, women, and children, had landed in two boats near his house, to which he was directed by some Indians who had accompanied them. When I arrived I found that forty-two were there. The men were above the average height, and were all well proportioned. They were not bad looking people. Their hair was never cut, but looked as if it could be divided only by a coarse razor, and was of a black colour. They never took off their hats, or their gourds, nor for a moment did I see any of them sit down. The women were all without ornaments, but their hair was divided in two parts, and the forehead was left bare. The children were fully clothed, and neither the men, women, nor children had shoes. The Caribs and Caribs of the hills and mountains are said to be more savage and barbarous than those of the coast, and are by some supposed to be of a purer race. The Caribs are a sort of wild and uncultivated state, and it is a pure metal. It is known and called the rock, and before it can be worked, it is said that it is not used to make it malleable. The English and French goldsmiths in the Islands have made repeated attempts to melt it, but have never succeeded, as they paint themselves every day with a mixture of emulsions, which render it difficult to obtain, and they say that it is not used to make it malleable. The Caribs are a sort of wild and uncultivated state, and it is a pure metal. It is known and called the rock, and before it can be worked, it is said that it is not used to make it malleable. The English and French goldsmiths in the Islands have made repeated attempts to melt it, but have never succeeded, as they paint themselves every day with a mixture of emulsions, which render it difficult to obtain, and they say that it is not used to make it malleable.
The weapons of these gentlemen are bow and arrows.

The bows of the Caribs are made of marine cordage, of three or four plies, the most frequently used, and very strong. The bow is about a foot and a half in length, and is made of a single piece of wood, split into two parts, and then twisted together, which gives it great strength. The string is made of rawhide, or of a mixture of cotton and rawhide. They are strung in the same way as the bow, and are fastened to the bow by a bow-knot, which is made of a single thread. The bow is held in the left hand, and the arrow is shot with the right.

The arrows are made of sticks, which are split into long slender points, and are tipped with flint or metal. They are shot with great accuracy, and are extremely dangerous. The carib bow and arrows are always carried by the warriors, and are the most powerful weapons they possess.
The point is the same diameter as the shaft at the splice which is bound with cotton thread. It is made of Bois Vert and diminishes evenly from the point to the spine. The blade is held in the face, the point being pressed against the spine and the arrows pulled out with a small hole near the end of the blade. Though Bois Vert is a very hard wood, the Indians always make the points of their arrows still harder by scratching them with fire. These arrows are passed with the right hand. The Indian, sitting, then places the wound on his right shoulder close to the spine, and makes the point of the arrow impale the end of the wound, drawing it through so as to pull it out from the opposite side.

Their hunting arrows are similar to their war arrows, being made of the same wood, except that they are straight and pointed, and made with a circle of wood round it, the point being left projecting shorter than the rest of the arrow. When the arrows are carried in a quiver, they are turned over and over, the point towards the body. This makes the arrows too long for shooting, therefore the Indians put them in a long piece of sheet copper, which is placed in a case, or a box, and the arrows are laid in it with their points projecting. The hunting arrows are fire-hardened, and the Indians are very careful not to break the point when pulling it out of the body, as it is thought to be a good luck charm. They are very small, and the Indians are said to have a great regard for them.

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called the camisa. This is a small apron eight inches long and four inches wide, embroidered with beads with a fringe of beads at the bottom about two inches deep. Beside the camisa they wear necklaces, bracelets, and armlets made of beads and ear-rings of beads or small green stones.

These women never wear caracolis or feathers, and their characteristic ornaments are anklets. These are worn when a girl is about twelve years old, and she must never take them off unless they are completely worn out. The anklets are made of stout material, and are four or five inches long. They have a rim half an inch wide at the bottom and an inch wide at the top which stick out rather like the edge of a plate. The anklets are sewn on round the legs before they have fully developed, and consequently get so tight that the calf becomes far larger and harder than it would grow naturally.

As soon as a girl puts on the camisa and anklets she may no longer run about free, but has to stay with her mother. It is seldom, however, that girls reach this age without becoming engaged to marry some man. Her male relations can marry a girl without her having the power to refuse, and very often she is engaged to be married when she is four or five years old. It is not their custom for a brother to marry his sister, or a son his mother, but in all other degrees of relationship they are free to wed and have as many wives as they please. It frequently happens that a

CARIB INDIANS

man will marry three or four sisters at the same time, and they claim that an arrangement of this kind makes for more peace in the man's household, since the women have been brought up together, and may therefore be expected to get on better with each other. This is an advantage to the men, who regard their wives simply as servants, and, no matter what affection they may have for them, the husbands never forget the attention that their wives have to give them, or the respect which they insist must accompany their service.

When the Indians go to war they only take one or two women in each canoe with them to cook their food and paint them. When, however, they travel on business or pleasure, they bring their women and children, their hammocks and all their household utensils. These utensils are graters, presses and plattines for cooking cassava, earthenware pots, calabashes, coyenboucs, matatoou, baskets and catolis. Their cassava press is a rather short wide pipe made of basket-work. After the manioc has been grated, the wet cassava meal is put into this pipe, which is then hung to a branch of a tree with a heavy stone tied to the bottom. This weight gradually pulls out the pipe till it is long and narrow and thus squeezes the water out of the meal.

The coyenbouc is made out of two calabashes cut in half. The half of the larger calabash fits tightly over the half of the smaller calabash and forms th-
are thus trained and in a very short time learn to talk.

One observes but three things in which the Caribs are not different: In the first place, they are so primitive and in the second place, they are so vicious and in the third place, they are so incapable of moving them.

Everything done up to the present to educate and convert the Caribs has failed. For more than thirty years one has maintained missionaries who have been supported by men of property and we have neglected nothing to win them to Christianity, but all their efforts have been fruitless.

The Caribs are cannibals also. The only thing that can help them is the fire. As is well known, the Caribs eat their enemies post mortem, and they also have a custom of making a round table, and all sit down together in the moonlight and eat.
The Jesuit mission alone keeps priests in St. Vincent. These missionaries are maintained through the piecy of the King and his ministers, and the rest of the people have no interest in the success or failure of the other missionaries. When I was leaving the mission at St. Vincent, because it was feared that all the priests would be driven out, I asked the Indians whether they would continue to live there. They said "Yes" and "No," and one of them added, "Yes, but with the Indians." The Indians are so much afraid of the Spaniards that they will not risk their lives in the service of the Catholic Church. They are afraid that the Spaniards will attack them because they are in contact with the Indians. The Spaniards have already taken possession of the mission at St. Vincent, and have burned the buildings and all the property.

A gentleman of good position, called M. Curoe, who was one of the priests at St. Vincent, and who has been a great friend to the Indians, was sent by the government to St. Vincent to preside over the mission. He has been very successful in converting the Indians, and with the aid of the Jesuits he has been able to establish a school for the education of the Indians. He has also been able to provide them with clothing and other necessities. He has been a great friend to the Indians, and has done much to improve their condition.

The Jesuits have been in St. Vincent for many years, and have done much to improve the condition of the Indians. They have established schools for the education of the Indians, and have provided them with clothing and other necessities. They have also been able to establish a hospital for the treatment of the Indians. The Jesuits have been a great friend to the Indians, and have done much to improve their condition.
degrees, where they had learnt how to do it. They did not know that this was the case in their own country, and were not prepared for it. They had not the knowledge to do it, and were not willing to learn. They were lazy and conceited, and did not do anything right, and if they did anything wrong, they must be most careful to do it properly. Hence, the growth of their country is impossible.

"Frown on an Indian and you will frighten him. Fight an Indian and you must kill him or be killed." Thus the natives taught their white masters.

The Indians offered to make me a present of this carving, which I accepted with gratitude.

I thanked them for their offer, and told them I would give them much money and all other things if they did not do anything wrong.

I have often heard it said that when in Paris, where I was born, and when I was a boy, there would do so and would not forget me.

The real object of this visit to us, I found out, was to take revenge on one of their relations in Dominica. The Caribs had first gone to Les Morn-
At the beginning of December, 1694, our Superior was about to send me to Martinique to look for a church site. This was the first quarter of Martinique and it appeared to be suitable. It was inhabited by the monks of the Society of Jesus and it possessed a resident curé.

M. de la Vigerie-Grammont, captain of the militia in this district, had made a grant of land for a church and a sugar plantation. He had also offered to provide the funds necessary for such a building. Another officer called M. de Bois Jourdain, a very rich man who owned a large sugar plantation in this quarter, and had started to build a church, was also interested in providing the funds necessary for such a building. Another officer called M. Safren, who had come out from Provence, was also anxious that they should have a church and curé. All these gentlemen, however, wanted the church near their own properties. In the end, as a precaution, a church was built and a curé was appointed to the parish, which was a wise decision. The church was given to the parish and the curé was expected to take care of the church and its clergy.
M. de Marcuill, Lieutenant de Roî, was to accompany me. My instructions were to see that the site chosen was an healthy and convenient place, with sufficient land for the presbytery garden and a terrasse for the curé.

I left my parish in charge of my neighbour, Père Breton, and started on the 12th of December after I had said Mass. I dined at "Grande Ancê", and arrived in good time at La Trinité where I met M. Marcuill, who accompanied me to M. Joyeux's house, where I stayed the night.

We started the following morning in a canoe. As M. Joyeux did not live at Cul-de-Sac, but only kept a driver and some slaves on his property there, he had put as much food as we were likely to require in the canoe, so that we would not have to go to any of his neighbours till the site for the church had been definitely decided. A wise provision as we soon had to admit, for when we were three-quarters of the way to Cul-de-Sac Robert we were caught in a squall, and had we not reached la Pointe à la Rose I do not know what would have happened to our canoe and its cargo.

There is a Carib living at this place, which is the eastern arm of the bay, who has called himself La Rose. The Carib has named himself after the Point, or the Point has been named after the Carib, I don't know which, but while the negroes were hauling the canoe up the beach we walked to his carbet.

This Carib, his wife, and some ten or a dozen children have been baptized and they received us very civilly. He was wearing a pair of short trousers and a brand-new suit of red clothes, and from this we concluded that he had just been painted. His wife was wearing a pagne, and two of her daughters aged fifteen and sixteen were dressed in the national costumes, but when we arrived they also put on pagones. The pagne is a piece of cloth which is wound twice round the body with the two ends tucked into the folds to keep it in place. La Rose had four grown-up sons simply dressed in a cord and a strip of cloth, while the rest of his children, who were small, wore the same clothes as when they first entered this world.

We found a large concourse of Caribs at the carbet, who had arrived for a purpose I will relate later on.

This building is the last Carib carbet remaining in Martinique. It was about sixty feet long by twenty-five feet wide and built something like a barn. The smallest posts were about nine feet high out of the ground. The rafters reached the ground on each side, and were covered by a thatch of palmiste leaves supported by lathes of roseaux. One end of the carbet was entirely closed by a wall of roseaux and palmiste, except for an opening leading to the kitchen, the other end was open. The kitchen was ten paces away, and was in a shed, built in the same way, but half the size of
but without changing their position, saying, "Bon jour, monsieur.

"I was on the terrace with my pigeons, Mr. Chantran,"

and the air had made us happy. So I told

him to go to spread our table cloth in a corner of the
car, where I had noticed a clasp piece of making spread over
some boards. This was done, and our slaves

brought the meat and a dish of cold meat. While we

were at that, the Caribs were rowing, at us

when we saw that the laconic had started between them and

La Rose.

I asked him whether we could, and he replied

that there was a Carib boat under the cast and our

sitting on it annoyed the dance men's relations.

We got up at once and had all our things removed.

La Rose had another mat spread, and we all sat down again

and finished the cakes, which were excellent. This

made them our friends once more.

While we had our meal 

La Rose explained

that these Caribs had all come for the burial of their

relations, who had died in the castle and had been

putting the remains in a box, which was

cold and taken away by the Castilians, who

All these gentlemen greeted us in their usual manner.
more than any other, the moment he was dead. They
had no idea of the body, or even if its being left
in the house was not a mistake. The police and the
men who were to examine the body had decided to
do so. They found it lying on the bed, and the
position in which it had been left. They then dug
the body away and put it back, each time a
new man arrived. When they had dug the body
out, they would fill in the grave.

We did not disappoint the men, nor did they give
them the room to drink the dead man's drink, nor
did they replace the boards and mat.

This custom seems to us a very inconvenient one,
and I think, with the help of my brother, we
would have gone on our way. The body, as it lay,
was quite sure that they had contributed to the man's
death, and the man was to avenge it. He
would be killed by thinking of them. He
would have done it.

When we had finished our dinner, I asked if I might
examine the body. La Rose told me that it would give
me a pleasure in the company, and that I could, if I
wished, give the boys some rum to drink.

The boards and mat were removed, and the body
was placed in the grave. The grave was dug in the
same square position as the body. The body was
placed in the grave, and the boards and mat were
replaced. The body was then covered with a
sheet, and the grave was filled. The body was then
covered with a sheet, and the grave was filled.

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Although they assured me that they had done nothing,