

returning on leave, and to assume the command. On the afternoon of the second day we came in sight of Grenada, whose lofty hills contrasted in no ordinary manner with the low country we had just quitted, and as the more minute features of the Island developed themselves to our view, the eye hung with admiration on various points in the perspective. Rich and flourishing vallies clothed in green, and teeming with the various produce of the climate, were every where visible between the dark and frowning masses, whose summits lay buried in the dense clouds perpetually rolling along these ridges of mountain, while, in the foreground, the town of St. George; built on a sloping ground, rose like an amphitheatre before us, and crested by the distant and imposing fortifications on Richmond Hill which, in the direction by which we approached, seemed to rise immediately over it, presented at once a picture of the beautiful and sublime. In a few hours we reached the commodious and land locked harbour of the Carenage, and being speedily disembarked, we were conducted by the Fort Adjutant to quarters assigned us in an old dilapidated Barrack, where the General Court Martial was to sit.

The town of St. Georges is built much more in the English style than that of Bridgetown. The houses are in general good—chiefly of a lead color—and covered with red tiles, which gives them a pleasing appearance, and is far less offensive and injurious to the eye. The streets however are truly infamous, being paved with small rough stones which are exceedingly painful to the feet. Foot paths are luxuries unknown here, consequently men and beasts mix promiscuously in the middle of the streets the stronger animal selecting the best part at the expense of the weaker. Immediately at the top of the town, and distinctly and pleasingly seen on approaching from the sea, are the Church and Parsonage, the latter half concealed amid a cluster of trees of rich foliage, and ornamented with a lawn tastefully disposed. Viewed collectively and from a distance, the houses appear to wear an appearance of elegance, but when examined separately and minutely, not one habitation in the town of St. Georges will be found worthy the attention of the stranger. The only building on which any taste or architectural skill appear to have been bestowed, is the Government House, situated about half way between the town and Richmond Hill Barracks, which are at the distance of a mile.—This building is spacious, and adapted to the purpose for which it was designed. It has rather extensive grounds attached to it, and is usually occupied by a General officer, who unites in his person the offices of Military Commander and civil Governor. In Barbadoes many little villa's are seen rising immediately on the skirts of Bridgetown. On an elevated and slightly projecting neck of land, the town of St. Georges is protected on one side, and the harbour on the other, by a strong fortification which commands the approach. This has however been much neglected, and the small barracks attached to it, and fixed on for our temporary residence, seemed ready to tumble about our ears at every gust of wind.

The criminals summoned before the Court were six in number, and all found guilty of repeated desertions. Three were condemned to die, and three to receive eight hundred lashes and have the letter D marked on their backs. The sentence of one of the latter was commuted from death to corporal punishment (although a very hardened character) on account of his age and the circumstances of his having two sons serving in the 71st Regiment. Here I cannot forbear remarking on the impropriety of suffering very young officers to sit on Courts Martial in cases of life and death; for, however disposed a young man may be to exercise his own judgment, there cannot be a doubt that it is often influenced by the opinions of his seniors in rank and years, and that even when he inclines to mercy, he delivers a contrary decision less in accordance with his own sense of the propriety of that decision, than with the necessity he conceives existing of adopting the maturer judgment of his superiors. Hence it not unfrequently results that one or two voices, if not delivered in levity, at least in doubt, decide the fate of the unhappy criminal, and launch him with all his crimes on his head into eternity. It is true that the sentence may be strictly just, but it is no less culpable in a member of so serious and imposing a tribunal, to pronounce his opinion, without having duly weighed and deeply considered every circumstance of the case, and where the life of a fellow being is at stake, it would be much better, in the event of doubt, to lean to the side of mercy, than to adopt the severer decisions of others.

No officer who has not completed seven years of actual service, and attended at least as many General Courts Martial as an attentive witness of the proceedings, should ever be selected for this purpose, and even then the President of the Court should be required not only to receive their simple opinions, but to inquire of the junior Members on what particular points of the evidence adduced these opinions are principally grounded.

I make these observations, because on this General Court Martial the first I had ever attended, I do not think my own experience was sufficient, and I greatly fear that in pronouncing sentence on these unhappy men, I was less governed by my own judgment than by that of the senior officers, who pointed out the nature of the crime and the penalty affixed to it by the articles of War. I know not whether the unwillingness I inwardly felt to adopt this severer decision was the result of the important character in which I stood, and of the awe and unpleasantness one must naturally entertain to deprive a human being of existence, even in conformity with the laws of justice, but often since that period has the recollection of those unhappy men occurred to me, and as often have I wished that my voice, although it would not have turned the scale, had not been for death. Other members of the Court even younger than myself, were, I have no doubt, influenced, in the same manner, for their experience was even less; nor were their judgments more mature. The only circumstance which can at all excuse the practice of summoning young and inexperienced officers to sit on General Courts Martial, is the difficulty of procuring a sufficient number to be spared from their regiments, who are better qualified for the duty. Yet in cases of so much importance to the criminal, it would seem not only more humane but more judicious to send the older and more experienced for this temporary purpose, and leave the discharge of regimental duties to the younger officers. It is in the West Indies chiefly, that this practice, which time and reflection have taught me to deprecate, is suffered to prevail. In the present instance however it had been deemed necessary to have recourse to severe and summary measures in order to put a stop to desertion, which had become very frequent in the York Rangers. These troops were all what are termed condemned men, destined to serve in the West Indies for life, and without any other chance of ever revisiting their native shores than that afforded by desertion; and one of the criminals now sentenced to die, had been convicted of repeated offences. Even after he was reconducted to prison, at the termination of his trial, he declared to the serjeant of the guard, that if he escaped with his life on the present occasion he would desert immediately afterwards. Mistaken man! he little imagined that at that moment a sentence was passing which would for ever arrest his future attempts, and that in a few days he would be summoned to expiate his numerous offences with his blood.

One of the greatest annoyances to every regiment going to the West Indies, is that of having numbers of these condemned men drafted into them from those they relieve. Doomed to serve in this climate alone, they are handed over to each corps in succession, and mixing with the mass of the regiment often corrupt by their example men of hitherto irreproachable character. Conscious that the climate in which they serve must receive their bones, they become at once reckless of life and indifferent to punishment. Shame that has long ceased to operate on the minds of men habituated to, and enduring the penance of crime, fails to inspire that natural horror of humiliating punishment which tends indirectly to the production of good, and they are, in consequence rendered obdurate and intractable.—Three hundred of these men were sent to us on the arrival of the Regiment in the West Indies, and proved a source of perpetual anxiety to their officers. In the company to which I was attached were three or four of these fellows, who seemed far to surpass their companions in sloth, filthiness, and inattention, and these men gave me more trouble than all the rest of the company together. One in particular must, I am persuaded, have been flogged a dozen times in six months, for no sooner was he out of hospital than he was brought to the triangles again. This man was incorrigible. He used to bear his punishment with sullen and uncomplaining endurance, and I am convinced that when finished he used to congratulate himself on the prospect of continuing a few weeks longer in hospital, and thereby evading the trouble and fatigue he appeared to find in the discharge of his duty.