

In his very first days on the island, he had learnt what was required to keep slaves in their place. He had seen a runaway slave savagely whipped, the wounds then marinated in salt, pepper and lime juice. The body of another runaway slave had been burned, but not before the head had been cut off and displayed on a pole. Thus he was instantly instructed in the basics of Jamaican life. At Vineyard Pen, his new employer ordered three hundred lashes for one of the slaves in Thistlewood's care 'for his many crimes and negligences'. Later, Thistlewood witnessed the trial of a slave who had drawn a knife on a white man. Found guilty, the wretched man was immediately hanged from the nearest tree, the offending hand was cut off and the body left to rot. The inexperienced Englishman would inevitably follow the example of his superiors. There could have been no doubt in Thistlewood's mind that capricious whippings, legalised executions and dismembering all formed the everyday ingredients of a culture of violence and fear which kept the plantation system in place.

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