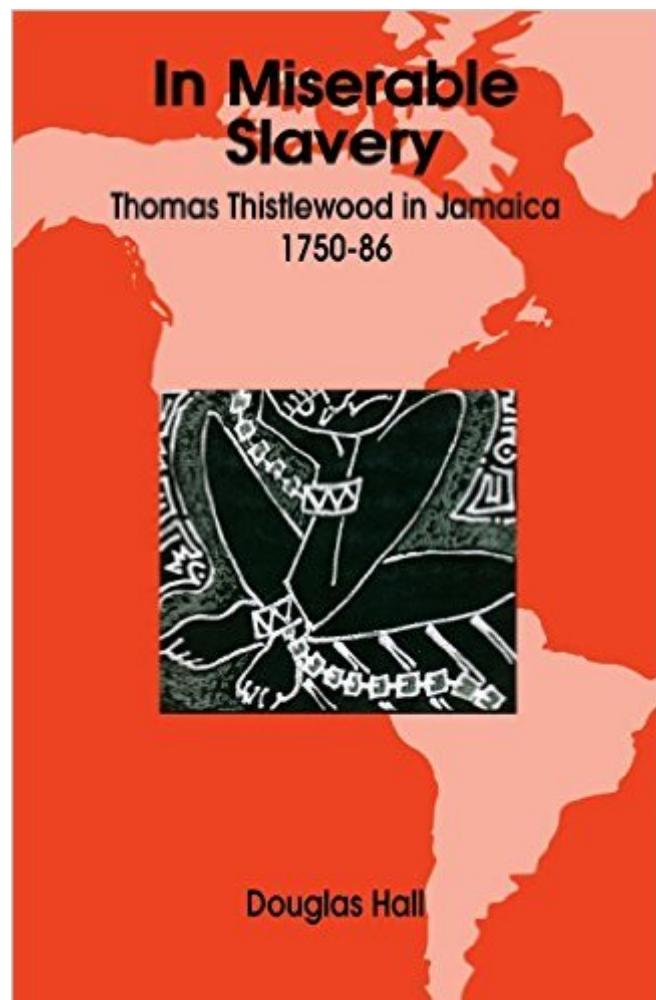


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# In Miserable Slavery: Thomas Thistlewood In Jamaica 1750-1786



## Synopsis

Book by Hall, D. G., Hall, Douglas

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Thomas Thistlewood, Englishman, came to Jamaica in 1750 to seek his fortune. He started off managing estates and was eventually able to buy his own. Thistlewood died in Jamaica in 1786, leaving a 10,000 page diary of his experiences. Fortunately, historian Douglas Hall edited this diary and brought it to publication. Hall divides Thistlewood's diary and life in Jamaica into eleven chapters. He gives us brief introductions to each chapter, commenting on Thistlewood's life and putting it into historical and cultural context. Hall summarizes much of the diary too; only about half of the book is verbatim. Nonetheless, Hall is a matter-of-fact, unobtrusive, very helpful - and skilled - editor. He gives us little or no analysis or opinion, letting the reader form her own impressions. This is an extremely important account of slavery. Indeed, I can think of nothing like it. In that sense, it is priceless. Unfortunately, it is also hard to say how typical Thistlewood is of estate managers and owners without other accounts to compare. History does come alive in these pages, as it is personalized. We learn a great deal about relations between master and slaves - particularly sexual relations and punishment. We also learn much about relations among whites - what they ate and drank, how they socialized, their service in the militia. Thistlewood gives us a lot of information on sickness as well, particularly of slaves. We learn about the Maroons hunting escaped slaves and staying at his house, the effects of the American Revolution, and the finances of his estate, which

were modest. One thing I learned that stood out is how often Thistlewood rented out his slaves as a source of income. If you want to know about slavery, particularly in Jamaica, then *In Miserable Slavery* is a must read.

Since publication "IMS" has become a priceless source for understanding slavery and Caribbean history. This is a study of Thistlewood in Jamaican society, thus only small parts appear from the 37-volume manuscript diary. Hall weaves excerpts together with his own text, so this is neither a conventional edited work nor a straight secondary account. Its utility partly derives from Thistlewood's status as overseer as well as master, placing him closer to slaves on a daily basis. He is highly informative on work regimes; relations between slaves, Europeans and Maroons, and within the European community; Jamaica's cattle-pen economy, etc. As a cattlekeeper TT was perhaps untypical in a sugar colony, but most evidence applies well there too. All the horrors are here: deadly labor and living conditions, punishments and violence, and most notable, many graphic accounts of sexual exploitation. Some was partly consensual but always within the context of unequal coercive power, and Thistlewood clearly describes raping female chattel. More shocking than such details is the offhand manner of reporting, suggesting how mundane such behavior was in slave societies. (Cf. T. Burnard, *Mastery, Tyranny & Desire*, a fuller study.) Many Europeans characterized their West Indian sojourns as a form of "slavery," but for actual slaves it was far more miserable. Grim but essential reading.

An edited journal of slave driver and plantation owner spanning thirty years. It offers an unvarnished account of slavery in the mid 18th century. No political agenda at work here "Just the fact, mam." Fascinating.

good book. good information. a little hard to read and figure out what is going on at times but it can be understood. buy it.

A very real account of the truth of slavery. Lives intersected. Love and passion know no boundaries

This book is good proving Deuteronomy 28:15-68 fits the slaves especially in the Caribbean.

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