

Visit at home. Interv. Evelyn Powell.
19.7.48.
T.O.

I came about 5 p.m. Mrs. Powell was making bammies in her kitchen. Her younger sister was sitting with the last baby of Mrs. Powell in her arms. Five more children were in or near the kitchen.

Samuel Powell is the son of Michael & Margaret Powell F.R.
Present household: 126.

*4 3/4 acre
p 4*

Powell	Samuel	head	34	born	B. Sav.	angl.	mason
"	Evelyn	wife	30	"	Top Hill	"	"
"	Milford	son	3	"	Black River	(hospital)	"
"	Llywelyn	son	5	"	"	"	"
"	Lennard	son	2	"	Bull Savannah	"	"
"	Malton	son	3/12	"	"	"	"

Stephenson Beverly sist-in-law 13 born Ball. Valley

The house.

It is the last but one house at the eastern end of the Green Olive Valley, situated between the house of Michael Powell (~~below~~ which is lower) and the house of Ernest Powell (which is higher up the hill).

The house was built by Samuel Powell about 3 years ago. It is well and strongly built. And - rare occurrence - with some attention to the kitchen, which will be described later on. The house has two rooms. In the one in which I had dinner there were two beds covered with white clean sheets, a big chest of drawers made of mahogany with some decorations carved. This was made by a carpenter in Ballards Valley and brought here by Mrs. Powell. In the middle of the room a small round table on a fancy leg "my husband built it". On this table were some flowers in a vase, a photograph of one of Mrs. Powell's sisters and some books. As it is extremely rare to find books on other than religious subjects I took a note of their titles. There were: 1/ one small prayer book, 2/ Rider's digest of 1946 - sent by an aunt from America - 3/ "Tarzan and the Golden Lion" borrowed from Cislina Powell 4/ "While the clock ticked" - a book of mild mystery type. The name of Vincent Powell was on it. Mrs. Powell told me that it is a very interesting book so I borrowed it to see what there is so interesting. In this room was another table on which my dinner was served, & wash-stand with basin.

In front of the house is a big catchment with a tank. The tank is covered with big logs and barbed wire. To get water one has to approach the tank by two steps to which leads a little gate which is locked. This precaution is made because of the children, as some disastrous accidents did happen (Eli Simpson's daughter was drowned a few years ago in the parents' tank.)

The kitchen is below the house just opposite the little gate to the tank. It is a big room with cemented floor. A cemented floor in the kitchen is a luxury by the

local standards (or perhaps just not custom) Right now I can't remember another kitchen in Bull Savannah with cemented floor. The "fire table" is polished. There is a wooden safe on one side of the fire place. At the other end of the kitchen there is a window with a wooden shutter in shape of a little door. This also is exceptional. As a rule kitchens do not have windows here.

Near the window a big shelf on which there was a sack with peas. Alongside both longer walls low benches, broad and properly made - not just a board on some boxes.

om/ Mrs Evelyn Powell is a svelt cheerful young woman. She was clad in a clean, but patched in some places, pink frock with a floral design. Her head was tied in a white kerchief. She knew about me from her mother-in-law whom I visited a few times. Without interrupting her occupation - baking bannies - she chatted with me cheerfully and I felt at once an easy and friendly atmosphere. She told me gladly and not without some pride her family history:

Her parents were Jacob and Hilda Stephenson. Her father was born in Ballards Valley but later on settled for many years in Top Hill. There Evelyn and some of her siblings were born. However after the death of the paternal grandfather who left quite a lot of land in Ballards ~~and~~ ~~grandfather~~ ~~who~~ ~~left~~ ~~what~~ ~~in~~ ~~Valley~~, Evelyn's father went back from Top Hill to the place of his birth. Evelyn explained that there was nobody "to take care of the ~~old~~ home" so her father had to go back.

Jacob and Hilda Stephenson had 17 children, of whom 4 died and 13 are still alive. The father of Evelyn died a few years ago, but the mother lives in Ballards Valley with some of the children and Evelyn says that in spite of so many children she looks "as young as me." Since her family is not from Bull-avannah I didn't take the names and ages of her sisters and brothers as it is an exhaustive business for the informant and usually mars the interview. She had 11 sisters and 6 brothers. One brother is in America on contract, one brother "living to himself" in a separate house in Ballards Valley. Three sisters are in Kingston. Two of them work in the Machado factory making cigars. The third stays with them learning sewing. "One sister married the other day", but Evelyn didn't go to the wedding as she couldn't leave her little baby. One sister - Beverly - lives with Evelyn helping her in the household. She goes to school and "is in the 5th book" "Only six in the home with mother" said Evelyn. But after I made some calculations we reached the conclusion that it is "only 5" in the home.

Evelyn was brought up in her parents home, first in Top Hill and then in Ballards Valley, She says that all the children were brought up in the home. The grandfather had "lots of land". Even Evelyn's father had a lot of land. He left some to each child and Evelyn got 2 acres in Ballards Valley as her share. It is cultivated by somebody on shares for her. Her father had also land in Little Pedro Village. I visited this quaint little fishing village a few months ago and found in my file (Villages and Towns

Fasc 1.) that a good part of the land there belongs to a Stephenson who rents it to people, either as "house spots" or "hallo" - a place for boat on the beach.

Her marriage

I asked Mrs. Evelyn how she met her husband, and how was it that he choose a girl from Ballards Valley. She said "It's me who has chosen him." and laughed. She was quite sure it was her choice which decided. She had the two first children while still living in her mother's home. ~~Shevner~~ At that time Samuel - her present husband - didn't have yet his own house and was living in his father's home. "Evelyn married about 2½ years ago and came to live in Bull-Savannah with her husband when the new house was finished.

Her children

She had her first two children in the Black "iver hospital. "I was a coward" she said. All the births were normal though painful. "It is terrible" she says speaking about the event. Her two last children were born in Bull Savannah. Miss "Cella" (Francella Simpson was called to help. Mrs. Evelyn is very satisfied with the services of Miss Cella. Evelyn wouldn't like to have more children. "They take too much of me, born too quick" (In a too quick succession). However she isn't sure she won't have any more "You can't tell." She is rather glad she has four boys. "They can help themselves better".

When she married she brought to her husband's home two sisters with her: Etta and Beverly. After a time Etta returned to Ballards Valley and Beverly stays with her. The sister who is learning sewing in Kingston expects to go to America. The aunt who lives there promised to "send for her."

The sick child.

Her third son Lennard who is 2 years old was born with a split palate. When he was fed all the food would go to his nose. He was taken to Kingston to the hospital and stayed there for 6 months. Evelyn would go to Kingston to visit the child. The palate was operated on and the child can eat. However it doesn't seem quite normal. His legs are thin and a little bent. He can't walk. His face is without expression, or rather motionless, he keeps his mouth open and stars in a void blunt way. During my long visit there he didn't utter a single sound. He was sitting first on the ground in front of the kitchen. Then somebody brought him inside and he was sitting on the floor, in the door way. He wetted the place and was removed again outside. His body is rather lump and they move him like a kuk thing. Mrs. Evelyn didn't seem very upset about his state. She said she thinks he will walk, perhaps the thought that the child will be underdeveloped didn't yet enter her head

The baby Milton

Milton was born last April. Mrs. Evelyn worked almost till the end of her pregnancy in the packing house wrapping tomatoes. "I work ther with my stummik". Milton had a clean blue frock and a blue decorative ~~gxxx~~ bonnet on his head. A white soft diaper was tied between his legs and pinned with a safety pin in the front. Beverly was keeping him all the time on her knees. A napkin was put under him. When he wetted himself Beverly undid the diaper (I thought it was ~~kisax~~ too tight pressing his tommy and everly had some difficulties to open the safety pin) and took him to the home to change.

The child's legs and hands were covered with some eruptions which must have itched him as it was scratched. Also his face was sratched. Evelyn said that it was because he was teething. I noticed that his nails were very long with the exception of the one on his "index" finger of the right hand which was almost non-existant (the nail) I believe it was because he kept constantly sucking this finger. I noticed that in Jamaica ~~stixdrenx~~ even big children of school age 8, 9 and even 10 years old suck their fingers. Usually two of them: the "index" and middle finger. Sometimes the mothers or grandmothers tell them not to do so, but as a rule nobody pays much attention to it. In my country usually children who start to speak don't suck their finger, and if they do they usually hide ~~frmv~~ ~~thv~~ it from the adults as it is considered improper and they are shamed for doing it. I also noticed that "young ladies" in ther thirties (30) also have this custom. Those I observed doing it are not from the country but from lower middle class from town. Whether it is done as a manicure application or whether it is just a mechanical habit I din't dare to ask.

The baby Milton however seemed quite happy and cheerful. I talked to him and he smiled back. He kept his head well and seemed to me rather strong and well developed for his three months. He is fed exclusively on mother's breast. She keeps hours of feeding but not too strictly. Mrs. Evelyn says that she always had enough milk to feed her babies. If however a woman hasn't enough it is good to drink a lot of water and particularly to eat "lots of soup". When afterwards I was offered dinner Mrs. Evelyn was giving breast to the baby who fell asleep during the procedure.

Means of subsistence.

4 Evelyn told me that her husband bought 3/4 acre from his father on which he built his house and two more acres also from the father in the woodlands. With the two acres Evelyn has in Ballards Valley they have together 3 3/4 acres. They plant on it "food" and tomatoes. Evelyn hasn't got to buy cassava or peas or corn fo r

home use. The main income however is derived from her husband's trade. He is the chief mason at the factory. Samuel learned masonry from Emanuel Powell who used to be the chief mason at the factory, but after his death last year Samuel succeeded him in this job. The usual rate for masons at the factory is 6/- per day but Samuel is getting more, however Evelyn didn't tell me how much. I expect he gets £3 per week - the same as the chief carpenter Calbert Elliott. (I know it from the factory pay-bill). At present Samuel is very busy. He comes for lunch and goes back to work coming sometimes after dark. Samuel hasn't got time to cultivate his land. He does a little work during some slack periods, but as a rule he hires labour. He gets boys from Thatch Walk. It is not a special one. He picks the boys at the factory for sporadic tasks. During the season Evelyn works also in the factory.

Budget, and diet.

Evelyn says she has to spend £1 weekly for the shop. Very often she runs short of cassava which is brought ~~xxx~~ from the woodlands on Saturdays. She has then to buy flour at the shop. Also she buys milk for the children the powdered milk in tins "Klim" She pays 4/6 for a tin. Recently she got a goat from her sister from Ballards Valley. The goat has had two kids and now Evelyn has fresh goat milk for her children. She says fresh milk is much better than the powdered one. She estimates it has more nutritional value.

Fresh fish is brought every other day from Alligator Pond. Evelyn didn't remember the name of the girl who brings the fish regularly, she only knew the girl is from Shaddock Hill. To-day the fish was brought rather late and Evelyn was worried as the bammies were ready and she planned to have fish and bammies for dinner. The fish were brought at last. Evelyn saw the girl through the kitchen window going to her mother-in-law place and sent the little Merline to fetch them. There were about 20 of them on a string the size of an average herring and pink. Evelyn said they were called "wenchman fish". For these she paid 1/6. Sometimes she pays 2/-. She complained that since the trucks come to Alligator Pond to buy fish for Kingston the local people can't get good fish. (The same complaint made her mother-in-law the other day) She fried the fish on a frying pan in oil. She said it was difficult to get oil now and she didn't like to use butter (In reality butterine, real butter is unobtainable in the village) Before frying the fish she went to the tank and washed them pouring water over them. While she was frying she took some oil from the pan with a spoon, poured it on her left hand and tasted it. I wondered how the hot oil didn't burn her. Then she told her sister to bring some scallion from the garden. She washed again and ~~xxx~~ chopped it into small pieces.

Etiquette.

While we were in the kitchen I said that I liked bammies. I really think it is an excellent and tasty basic food. The bread is awfull here. It is baked in the bigger towns and sent to the shops. It must be prepared in a way to keep fresh long and it has the texture and taste of wet cotton wool. It is almost chalk white and somehow gives an impression of deadness. A bammie is of the shape of a pancake; elastic and firm is pleasant to bite in. It has a "raw" flavour and is very nutritious. Evelyn asked me whether I would like some. I said of course I would love to have some of her bammies. However I stayed quite long and was getting up to go. Evelyn was disappointed "Won't you have some bammie and fish"? I stayed for the meal.

While the fish were fried the eldest boy Evelyn started to whiper he wanted some and was pulling his mother's skirt. He didn't get a fish however, got a piece of bammie and went outside to eat it. Evelyn says the children don't wait for the father with dinner as he comes often late.

Evelyn sent her sister to the house to bring plates. Beverly brought a big white plate and three white ordinary size ones and one green. Evelyn sent her back with the green one telling she has to bring a white one instead. On the big square plate two plates were put: in one bammies in the other fish. These plates were covered each with another plate. The whole was taken by Evelyn to the house. She stayed there for a few minutes and then came back and said "You may come". I followed her to the house. On the table covered with a white cloth the food was served. Evelyn showed me the basin full of water and I washed my hands and got a clean towel to wipe them. Then I sat at the table. There was only one plate with fork and knife. I asked Evelyn whether she won't keep me company but she said no laughing shyly. So I sat and proceeded to eat. The children followed us and were in the door way. They were promptly however told by Evelyn to go away. The kitchen seems to be their realm, but the room where a guest of honour is entertained the children are not allowed. Evelyn sat on the other side of the table but didn't eat. After a while her sister brought the baby Milton and Evelyn gave him breast to suck.

There were three fishes sprinkled with green eska llion, freshly fried and very appetizing. I ate the dinner with pleasure. Evelyn said the salt fish costs just the same and she prefers the fresh one as it is healthier. She seems to attach great importance to fresh food which seems to me a healthy symptom in this tin fed country.

While I ate we talked about various things. She said she preferred Bull-avannah to Top Hill and Ballards

Valley as the place here is much more lively - there are more activities here.

Religion

She didn't approve however of the various religious activities. She is an anglican. "I go to the anglican church and my husband too." She said in Ballards Valley there weren't any such churches like Jehovah Witness and Bible Church of God or Seven Day Adventists. Some of the Adventist go there preaching but in Ballards Valley "we have only church" (meaning anglican). She was particularly against the Jehovah Witness. "Them curse and do such things in the field (?) and they say they are the right way". None of her father-in-law family is Jehovah Witness with the exception of Ceciline who joined because of her fiancée Vincent Powell. Her mother in law goes also to the anglican church. She didn't approve of "such churches".

*Motherhood
a go*

Physical maturity of girls.

Speaking of children etc. Evelyn said that many girls have children too young. She thinks the babies can't be strong, they are not strong when the mother is so young. It is deterioration. "The girl not yet developed, isn't strong enough for the baby." I asked at what age the girls started to have their period. Evelyn said at 11 or 12. But previously (I understood in her mother's young days) there were "big women of 15" who only then got their period. It used to be so, but now it changed and girls get the period at 11 and 12. I asked her what was the reason for this change. She didn't know, but is certain it is so. (I wonder whether with the darkening of the Ballards Valley population the bigger admixture of the african blood could have an influence upon an earlier maturity. However it might be just a legend.)

She was expecting her husband to return from work and wanted me to meet him. It was getting late however and I had still another home on my schedule. I didn't want also to tire Evelyn and keep her from her numerous occupations. The children were clamoring their dinner and must have been rather cross with me for eating first the best bits.

After I have finished the dinner Evelyn told her sister to bring water. This was brought in a big glass jar and a glass on a small plate put upside down. This is the custom in Jamaica to put plates and glasses and cups upside down so flies and dust don't dirty it. Food is always covered too with a plate when served before people sit at the table.

It was a pleasant visit in a happy home.