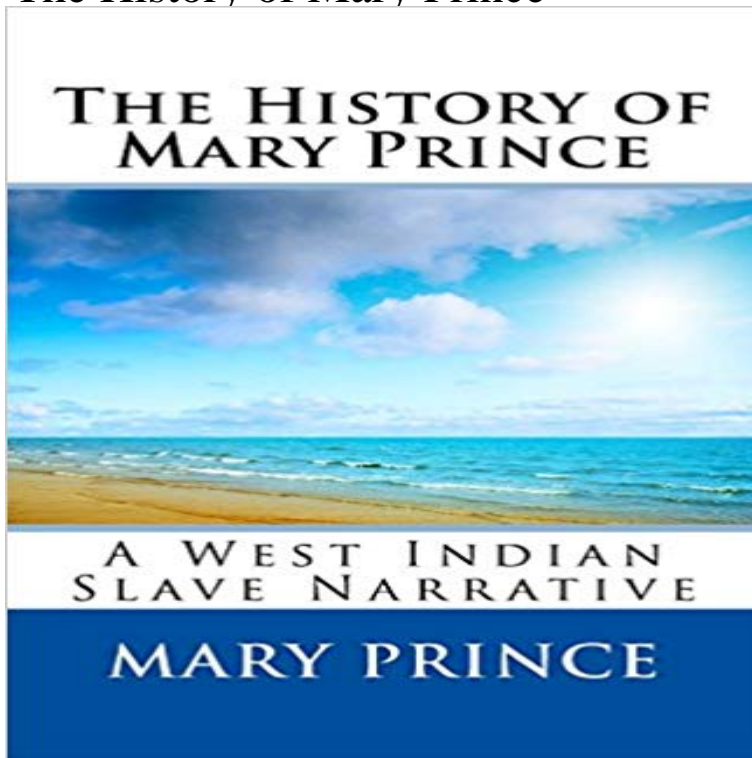


The History of Mary Prince



Born in Bermuda in the late 18th century, Mary Prince was a Black woman who survived enslavement in the colonial world of the Caribbean. She orally told her story to a third party, who transcribed it. First published in England in 1831, *The History of Mary Prince, a West Indian Slave* is one of the most important narratives of the slave experience in the Americas. This book describes in detail the reality of the slave experience: the dehumanization of Black people, the moral degradation of their masters, and the ever-present violence. Prince's story is also an important early defense of the humanity of people of African descent. She notes that slave masters think that black people are like cattle, without natural affection. But my heart tells me it is far otherwise. Prince tells of her labor in the salt ponds of Turks Island, her conflict with a hired mulatto woman, her spiritual life in the Moravian Church, and many other topics. Ultimately, she celebrates the desire and hope for freedom: All slaves want to be free. While *The History of Mary Prince* does not quite attain the level of literary craftsmanship and psychological complexity as slave narratives by Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, it is still a powerful, authoritative, and important human testament. Mary Prince declares, I have been a slave--I have felt what a slave feels, and I know what a slave knows. We of later centuries need to hear her words.

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