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THE

BRITISH WEST INDIES

AND

AFRICAN IMMIGRATION.

BY

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AFRICAN IMMIGRATION

TO

THE BRITISH WEST INDIES.

THE important subject of the Slave-trade—its total abolition, and the immigration of coolies to British and French colonies—has been variously, freely, and ably discussed by their respective advocates, the past few months, both through the press and other channels of public opinion ; any matter, therefore, directly or indirectly tending to elucidate such questions in any one of their phases, may possibly be considered as worthy a certain amount of attention from that portion of the reading public who feel an interest in the progress and civilization of the dark races. Those conversant with the subject will have doubtless turned their attention, from time to time, to the free state of Hayti—sometimes a kingdom, occasionally an empire, and now a republic. The downfall of the Emperor Soulouque and his ministry will not consequently have escaped the notice of either the philanthropist or slave-holder.

The following translation of a speech addressed to president Geffrard, (Soulouque's successor), in the presence of his ministers, by the British Consul, Byron, at Port-au-Prince, on the accession to power of the new president, conveys to the mind very clearly and at a glance the present state of civilization in Hayti. It is not our intention to enter upon any discussion in detail of the merits or demerits of these particular people, but we nevertheless consider the events touched upon by our Consul as worthy of examination, shewing, we fear, too clearly, how sadly our black brethren are deficient in all elementary qualifications necessary to a happy and

thriving community, and determining how near they may be to the ideal of those who erroneously imagine the Haytian blacks (*without the intelligent aid of the white*), to be struggling successfully through a variety of disadvantages, and some fifty years' independence, towards advancement and good government:—

“I hope,” said the British Consul, in addressing the President of Hayti in his official capacity,* “I hope that foreigners, under your Excellency's government, will be treated with greater respect in their intercourse with natives than that hitherto received, and have no further reason to complain of the vexatious delays and annoyances consequent upon a slow and tedious system of administration in the dispatch of public business adopted by the late government, in the injustice, too apparent and complained of, in the courts of law, of the turpitude of the judges, or of the impossibility of executing a judgment against natives, when passed by the tribunals.

“It is not my desire to meddle with the internal concerns of this country, but in the interests of humanity, religion, and morality, I think I may be permitted to offer the following remarks:—I trust we are never again to hear of whole regiments of soldiers being pressed into the service of this colonel, or that general, and, by a system of *forced labor* worse than *slavery*, compelled to work estates at a nominal, not to say an absurdly low, rate of remuneration.

“It must be a source of congratulation to us all that some of the most revolting emblems of the empire have ceased to exist. I may enumerate, amongst others, that horrible dungeon of Fort Labouque, where, with a refinement of cruelty, prisoners were chained in the underground cells of that foul prison, immolated in a sea of marine mud and accumulated filth, their bodies too soon to become the food of noxious and loathsome reptiles. I would also refer, with feelings of regret, to the abominable practices of *Feticism* and *Idolatry*, to which the members of the late Imperial family were addicted, and express a hope that foreigners visiting this country will not have to record *idolatry* and *witchcraft* amongst the vices of its rulers. I refrain from speaking at any length upon the constitution and laws of the country, but a few words upon the subject will perhaps be allowed me. Montesquieu has observed, that when a foreigner visits a country for the first time the question he would ask would not so much be, Are the laws of this country good? but, *Are they executed?* Hayti, as your Excellency is aware, is in the possession of an excellent code of laws, (the Code Napoleon), but under the late government those laws were not administered. We nevertheless feel assured, that the enlightened men who form the present government will see to the better administration of affairs, and, by the execution of those laws necessary to the well-being of the state, consult the interests of Haytian citizens, and also those of foreigners. In conclusion, I would propose, gentlemen, that you join me in the cry of ‘Vive le President!’ ‘Vive la Liberte!’ ‘Vive l'Union!’ but to obtain the latter, sink all bad passions, and all distinctions both of class and color!”†

* Feuille de Commerce d'Hayti.

† Here we have Obeahism, forced labour, tyranny, and many other symptoms of retrogression, and barbarism, plainly visible.

When laws are enacted under a despotic government, which from their severity or other causes become offensive to a community, they cannot fail to excite indignation upon the part of the governed, as simply the result of a swollen sovereign power, which, with its irresponsibility, and concomitant vices, they are destined to increase; but, when a government, either imperial or colonial, legislates for the safety and welfare of society, and the mutual advantage of classes composing it, it cannot be truly asserted that such wholesome administration of laws, even if somewhat stringent in practice or effect, is arbitrary in character.

From the same train of reasoning, we conclude the people of Jamaica (or any other colony) should be at liberty to frame such laws as may be applicable to its exceptional position, or the character of its inhabitants; and in making every allowance for the shortcomings of negroes, we are not of those who insist that the same set of enactments which regulate the conduct of one community, are admissible in another:—that, for example, the laborious persevering English settler of *tropical* Natal, or of temperate New Zealand, requires so stimulating a course of legislation as the apathetic, indifferent negro of the West Indies!

By the most cursory examination of the matter composing Mr. Byron's address, it will be seen that the republic or empire of Hayti has accomplished little, if anything, since her emancipation, towards her own advancement as a State, or the elevation of the negro in the estimation even of his warmest friend, or kindest sympathizer, although held up occasionally by unenquiring and enthusiastic "Negrophiles," as the model school of black and coloured people.*

To expect advancement from the negro as a social being, or labour from him as an able-bodied man, without some controlling influence, is almost to demand an impossibility; as soon might one look for intellectual development in a child untrained to study by gentle coercion, or uninstructed in the rudiments of education. To abandon him to his own rude resources is not merely not an act of kindness, but from experience is shewn to be one of positive cruelty.

* We would observe that the introduction of the foregoing matter connected with Hayti, is simply with a view of considering the capacity of the negro for self-government and self-direction.

Presuming, therefore, the reader to be to a certain extent conversant with the true position of the negro in various parts of the world, especially his relation *vis a vis* the West Indian planter, we shall proceed, without further preamble, to a consideration of the difficulties by which this intricate question is surrounded, illustrating, as we proceed, the opinions we have previously enunciated in connexion with the governing and the governed, treating especially of immigration and its necessity, not with the ambitious hope of supplying perfect remedies for existing wants and evils, but from a sincere desire to bring under notice the more salient points of the question in its different bearings.

Abruptly, therefore, dismissing Hayti as our introductory subject of illustration, for the more varied theme of the negro in his relation to labour and immigration in our own colonies, we would introduce it as a question calling loudly for more defined and active legislation, being replete with interest and importance, internally to our West India possessions and their inhabitants, and externally of much interest in our foreign policy; and further, a subject, if allowed to remain open to misconstruction, calculated to produce serious complications with friendly powers.

Viewing Slavery with all the horror and disgust due to that "peculiar institution," we nevertheless start with the opinion, that the Negro *uncontrolled* retrogrades rather than advances in civilization: as a consequence, is a useless member of society, both to those of his own sphere, or to those above him, and becomes unmanageable and impracticable in that state. We have endeavoured to illustrate a portion of this assumption, by pointing to the Africans, and their descendants in the island of Hayti, after fifty years of independence; and we shall endeavour if possible more forcibly to demonstrate this view of the case by examples, exhibited in some of our West India Islands, where the condition of the negro-creole is in many particulars parallel to that of the Haytian; availing ourselves freely of parliamentary and other information published on the subject; adding the results of personal observation and experience of Hayti and our own colonies.

The Islands of Barbados and Mauritius are both in a highly prosperous and flourishing state, consequent upon an abundance of *continuous* field labour, produced by elements utterly opposed,

in the first named, by a superabundant creole, or resident negro population—and in the second, by the effect of coolie immigration from our neighbouring Indian possessions—Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras. Jamaica and its planters, on the other hand, are on the verge of ruin, from the *absence of creole labour*—the industry of the island occasionally receiving a slight impetus from the introduction of coolies. St. Lucia, St. Kitts, Grenada, St. Vincent, Dominica, Tobago and our smaller Windward Islands, more or less suffering from the want of labour at the hands of creole negroes, receive a proportionate amount of relief from foreign labour when and where introduced; while our important possessions of Trinidad and British Guiana *have received* a most surprising impulse, in production and general trade, from the same beneficial cause—*Immigration*.

The preceding facts, especially the depression of Jamaica, tend to the immediate conclusion: Firstly, that there is a want of labour on the part of the planters; and, secondly, that our sugar-producing colonies are quite dependent *upon*, and, *to whites*, utterly worthless without the introduction of *foreign labour* of some kind. The island of Barbados, from its peculiar features, being an isolated exception to the rule; a colony, be it observed, most densely populated, where land is at the high rate of £100 to £150 per acre, freeholds unknown amongst the negroes, though some few estates are rented by the most thrifty and industrious of their race. Society in the island is in a healthy natural state—the proprietors offer work and receive labour—the estates well and highly farmed render the planter prosperous—the negro is contented and happy, and both the employed and employer mutually satisfied. The condition of the colony of Jamaica is as opposed to Barbados in all these essential qualifications to prosperity as can well be conceived. It may here be inquired: What are the means to assimilate the position of the two islands, so singularly opposed the one to the other? and have remedial measures been seriously considered?

Jamaica, as is well known, is a large island, with a sparse and lazy population (as compared to Barbados), composed principally of squatters on crown or “ruinate” land, or those holding farms, at a nominal rental, occupying in most cases infinitely more ground than the majority would care to cultivate, even supposing the holders to be

industriously inclined. The following official information furnishes some *bad* pictures of the state of society amongst the lower order in Jamaica, and conveys to the mind, in few words, a tolerably accurate idea of the decline of that beautiful and fertile island :—

“The negro will not be stimulated to greater exertion by higher wages—he will be satisfied to earn, by the labour of two days, what he has hitherto earned by the labour of four days—a sufficiency for his weekly support.”

Further,

“Since the termination of slave apprenticeship in 1838, 200 of 500 sugar estates have been abandoned in the Island of Jamaica, involving a sacrifice of at least two millions of invested capital, and the total ruin of proprietors, in all cases, where they had no other dependance.”*

Again,

“It is lamentable to observe the number of idle men, women, and children who infest the streets by day, and prowl along its alleys by night, many of the parents of these children being themselves idle characters—have neither the inclination nor the means to give to their families support, or the plainest rudiments of education; hence we see the streets and bye-lanes overrun by a squalid and diseased progeny, whose future history is too painfully before us.”†

These facts exhibit Jamaica in an agricultural and, perhaps, in a social sense also, as one of the lowest among our possessions. “Aux grands maux des grands remèdes” is a trite saying, and we think of felicitous application in the present case.

Having previously inquired of ourselves the means at the disposal of Government for applying a remedy to the disease, we, with diffidence, approach a matter where so many delicate susceptibilities are involved, and one, perhaps, in the eyes of a few, in its mere consideration encroaching upon the “*liberty of the subject*”—a leading point in the British constitution, demanding, doubtless, of authorities, local and imperial, the most reverential regard and respect: still, not more worthy of reverence, we hold, than the collective clauses of that time-honoured composition which equally provides for the welfare of the mass.

The practice of squatting, or the tenure of small estates at nominal rentals, to no good purpose, is obviously in a great degree the source of the present evils observable in the colony of Jamaica, operating most prejudicially in the interest of the planter, placing the labouring man in a position for which, from his apathy and ignorance, he is totally

* Parliamentary Report, 1859, part i., p. 262.

† *Ibid.*, 268.

unfitted, nor would be found filling, were it not for the insignificantly low price of land, by the impoverished resources, not to say ruin, of the original holders of estates—land being the cheapest commodity in the island, and labour the dearest!

We venture, notwithstanding the delicacy of the subject, upon a few proposals in connection with the same, which, if carried into effect, might grapple with some of the evils complained of by the planter in Jamaica, without, it is hoped, interfering with the liberty of the negro, or the prejudices of those whose estimate of the rights of the race are so exaggerated and extreme.

In the first instance, an examination by a local commission (under imperial sanction) of the titles by which all estates are held, both large and small, not so much with a view of dispossessing the present occupants holding imperfect titles to crown and other lands, as for the better purpose of assessing, more correctly and heavily, the present renters of estates, whether of European or African origin. The fund so created—which we should desire to see of an importance commensurate with the emergency, allowed in the case of Jamaica to be great—to be entitled and considered as “An Island Improvement Fund,” and specially employed for that desirable purpose.*

1st. It should furnish, for the benefit of resident planters and to those urgent to recommence operations, that aid and indirect assistance which the wisdom of a commission might dictate—such as the opening up of old roads, construction of new ones, and furnishing by aqueducts a supply of water power, &c.

2nd. It should defray expenses consequent upon the introduction of labourers, and particularly it should provide a reserve fund as bounty-money for coolies, in lieu, and to the extinction of grants of land: the latter a system, which may have a certain action in attaching labourers to the soil, but has also the great counter-disadvantage of diverting him from his regular employment, and increasing

* “Are you aware,” exclaims the Political Economist, “that your proposal is totally opposed to our preconceived notions regulating such subjects—in fine, without *example*?” We are aware of it; but we are also aware that the present condition of Jamaica and its society is without example also, in the history of our colonies. Restore master and servant, i.e. capital and labour, to their relative and appropriate positions, and we would ask no more.

an evil now too apparent in the inactivity and unwillingness to labour upon the part of the creole negro.*

The action and effect of such a system of direct taxation as that suggested (if practicable) is obvious. Proprietors of abandoned estates would have an opportunity offered to them of improving their present desperate position, and that without oppressing unjustly the labourer; while with the coolie or negro the tax would operate in one of two beneficial ways; either, by necessitating the cultivation of estates by the small freeholders or renters, to meet the increased taxation, they contributing with other and larger proprietors their quota to the "Island Improvement Fund;" or, such estates being permitted to lie fallow and unproductive, the means to pay the assessment would be wanting, and becoming encumbered, the property either be given up to its owner or abandoned; and the holders, be they Negro, Creole, Coolie, or African, would thus return to that sphere for which they are peculiarly fitted, namely, *labourers*; and we should, as a consequence, hope to see the present race of creole negroes resolve themselves, from a desultory, unsteady, capricious, set of workers, into one of comparative industry. Let the Governor-in-Chief of the West Indian Windward Islands express his views on this subject:—

"I am sorry, though I cannot say I am surprised, to learn that the present system, which has been the main cause of the diversion of creole labour from the sugar estates in all the colonies except Barbados, prevails in St. Lucia, and under which the labourers have been permitted to occupy, without rent, crown lands, or those belonging to vacant successions, which ought to be protected by the Government, or the estates of the planters.

"Had the planters, at the period of emancipation, adopted the rule of charging rent for all lands occupied, and had the Government insisted on a heavy weekly payment or *monthly tax* from all those occupying Crown or other lands, the negroes *would have had to labour* as they do in Barbadoes."†

Labour pursued from six to eight hours a day would ensure for the negro agriculturist a sufficiency to support life not only comfortably, but procure for him luxuries and enjoyments which it is un-

* A small provision-ground being all that is necessary to supply the wants of a negro family.

† Parliamentary Return, 1859, part ii., p. 7.

happily the lot of but few *white* artizans or labourers to taste. Negroes, therefore, should be entirely self-supporting, contributing to the expenses of a government, administered as much for their benefit and protection as for that of Europeans. Taking a liberal and common-sense view of the relative positions of the negro and the European in any one of our colonies, is it a consistent or equitable arrangement, while the latter is devoting his best energies, physical and mental, for the interest of society and himself, that the former should be reposing in a grove of mangoe trees, *identifying* himself in no way with the exigencies of the white man—wholly indifferent to the prosperity, advancement and expenses of a state always prepared to protect him, within, by the wise and impartial administration of its laws; and without, by the two expensive services of army and navy—institutions to which the *creole* negroes but very slightly contribute, either in pocket or person. Reasonably, therefore, where such benefits are conferred, might not some corresponding advantages not only be expected, but demanded, according to the condition of the individual recipients? In the case of the untutored negro, ignorant of, or indifferent to, his responsibilities, a direct appeal should be made to his physical capabilities, by claiming the labour of his hands as the only possession in his gift; not by interfering with the liberties of a free agent, but by enactments such as we have suggested, or which in the wisdom of local authorities might be considered necessary. The following, from the pen of an able stipendiary magistrate of Jamaica, in its concluding lines conveys our meaning:—

“Whatever may be the course adopted with regard to immigration, the natives who have settled on their own freeholds should not be lost sight of. Should these be improved in their condition, with their families properly fed and clothed, receiving medical aid when ill, and the rudiments of useful instruction, the political purposes of existence have been answered, and we have a right to be satisfied; *but, should we find the contrary to be the case, in any of all these points, then these social obligations should be indirectly enforced, through sanitary and educational enactments.*”*

The negro, to benefit society, and contribute to the maintenance of its institutions—political, educational and sanitary—should be a consumer of exciseable or taxable articles; whereas his tendencies are the other way—he works but little, retrogrades when left to him-

* Parliamentary Return, 1859, part i., p. 262.

self without the control of the white, and has a propensity for the acquisition of land, to the cultivation of which he is in nine cases out of ten totally indifferent and unequal.

In the preceding treatment of our subject, we have endeavoured to exemplify, by a picture of Hayti, the present and probable future of a negro community abandoned to its own resources, *i.e.*, *listless indifference, characteristic of the race*; demonstrating, without partiality or passion, and we trust without doubt also, that the Negro is neither remarkable for industry or self-improvement, but rather for the want of these qualities. We have exhibited Barbados and Jamaica as the highest and lowest examples of West India Colonial prosperity, and while accounting for the existing causes of the relative position of the two islands, we hope we have succeeded in showing, to the satisfaction of our readers, that *free* grants of land to coolies or Africans, and the occupation of Crown and other lands, by creole negroes, have hitherto failed in producing results which might have been expected from such a line of policy, by its originators. We apprehend we have demonstrated by implication, equally and conclusively, that *increased population* is the present great remedy for upholding the prosperity and perhaps also the nationality, of our West India possessions.

But in the face of all that we have stated on the subject—of the want of labour, the source of its supply, and the undoubted apathy of the negro—we with pleasure record the increased imports and exports to and from the islands, and rejoice in attributing these happy results, in a certain degree, to the effects direct and indirect of emancipation; but when we are told, without concurrent proof, in certain quarters, * that the increased production of sugar is the immediate effect of increased industry on the part of the negro, who has greatly (*parenthese*) advanced in the social scale, we must be permitted not only to doubt such a state of things, but, in support of our scepticism, trace to its true and varied causes what we conceive to be the origin of such increase in production and importation.

Firstly and *mainly*, the introduction of Asiatic coolies and Africans into the colonies.

Secondly, the substitution of the plough for the hoe, where the prejudices of the negro and the nature of the ground have permitted the adoption of the former.

* Buxton's "Freedom and Slavery in the West Indies."

Thirdly, improved machinery, in all that relates to sugar-making and the distillation of rum.

Fourthly, an increase in the creole population of the West Indies, by the existence of freedom and free labour, in place of slavery and forced labour.

Illustrations confirmatory of these conclusions are not wanting; we shall content ourselves by pointing to the wonderful advancement of the Island of Mauritius and its present exports of sugar, as being almost, if not quite, conclusive, of the *importance of immigration* as the main feature of *increased production* in our colonies; adding a paragraph from the immigration report of Trinidad upon the same subject:—

“In the colony of Trinidad, there exists no immediate limit to the production of sugar, except the supply of labour: and the preparation for the heavy crop of 1858 was based on the expectation of 3,000 coolies arriving for distribution in 1857.”*

Here we perceive that labour is a want felt, and that immigration is the only means of satisfactorily relieving it; facts we shall again refer to, and fully examine.

Having previously illustrated the scarcity of labour in Jamaica, and the indifference on the part of the creole negroes to the requirements of the island, suggesting, as an expedient for its improvement, a plan for the increased taxation of the inhabitants—let us consider such proposal, which, on referring to, with all that has been adduced in connection with the state of the labouring-classes (*as a measure of public safety and welfare*), cannot be viewed as affecting them either harshly or unjustly; neither do we foresee any serious opposition that would attend the working of such a system of assessment, seeing that in the Islands of Montserrat and Nevis extraordinary direct taxation has been submitted to with the happiest effects; it is but fair to state, however, that the import duties were totally abolished in the last-named island when the increased taxation took place: the latter amounting to no less than 20 per cent. on rentals.†

Without the slightest interest in the suggestion which follows, except as a national one, we cannot but view such a two-fold measure of direct taxation, and abolition of import dues, otherwise than

* Parliamentary Return, 1859, part i., page 314.

† Buxton's “Freedom and Slavery in the West Indies.”

peculiarly applicable to the island of Jamaica—harmonizing at one and the same time with the present requirements of the colony, and the adaptability of that island for free-trade, by its geographical position, sufficiently shown by the proximity of the southern side to the Spanish Main, rendering the town and harbour of Kingston especially suitable for a large and growing trade with the states of Central America, now attracted to the Danish Island of St. Thomas, to the detriment of British interests, by the existence of two important advantages to traders and ships—advantages which the Spanish-American has not failed to perceive in his transactions with the two islands, consisting, firstly, in the fact of the Island of St. Thomas being a free port; and, secondly, as the rendezvous for the ships of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company—considerations which notoriously divert the trade and traffic, legitimately belonging to Jamaica, into a foreign channel.

Having suggested immigration as the only great remedy for the present condition of our West Indian colonies, and having also proposed increased and extraordinary taxation in particular instances, as a *beneficial measure*, it is desirable to satisfy our readers more thoroughly and officially that the labour market is as bare as it is represented. The following passages, we think, are calculated to remove any doubt that might have been entertained on that head; and to elucidate, also, the exact position of most of the West Indian islands up to very recent dates, in connection therewith.

Governor Darling, in a despatch to the Colonial Secretary, dated Jamaica, 25 Sept., 1857, in referring to resolutions passed in the island, states:—*

“The first of these resolutions is directed to the object of obtaining, at as early a date as possible, an additional supply of suitable labourers from India.”

Governor Darling, in allusion to Africans from Sierra Leone, again writes to the Colonial Secretary as follows:—

“I am anxious, therefore, to lose no time in expressing my hope that a fair proportion of these people will be sent to Jamaica, where specific applications for the employment for a considerable number have been addressed to the local government, &c.”†

* Parliamentary Return, 1859, part i., p. 199.

† Ibid., p. 208.

In a despatch of the 26th of May, 1858, the Governor again writes the Colonial Secretary thus:—

“Memorials have been addressed to me by the custodes and several of the magistrates and planters engaged in the conduct of estates of St. Thomas-in-the-Vale, and St. Mary’s, on the subject of the deficiency of labour, and the means of remedying that deficiency.”*

On the 6th of August, again:—

“I have the honour of transmitting you two memorials addressed to me by the proprietors, attornies, &c., of Westmoreland and Manchester respectively, complaining of the want of labourers for hire, and the loss they experience in their agricultural operations in consequence.”†

So much for the Island of Jamaica. Let us now proceed to the other islands, where we are acquainted by Mr. Buxton ‡ no want of labour exists.

In *Trinidad*, in the month of July 1857, the standing counsel on immigration report thus:—

“The conclusion, however unsatisfactory, seems unavoidable—that of the *emancipated population* and their descendants, three-fourths contribute but little to the production of the colony, beyond the food which they themselves consume, and nothing to its exportable produce.”§

British Guiana.—The following is an extract from a despatch of Governor Wodehouse to the Colonial Secretary ||:—

“QUEEN STREET, MAYFAIR,
“28th January, 1858.

“In paragraph 7 of his despatch, No. 42, Mr. Hincks states, if it could have been fairly proved, to the satisfaction of Her Majesty’s Government, that certain West India planters were unable to obtain free labour to cultivate estates established during slavery.

“I think that expediency might have been satisfied by the demand for emigrants. This admission on the part of British Guiana is conclusive. We have lost all our cotton, it may be said all our coffee; and, after a very great outlay for immigration and improved machinery, the sugar crop has but just reached that of the time of emancipation. Numerous sugar estates have been abandoned, and I cannot recollect one that has been brought back in a state of cultivation. When I *first* went to the West Indies, I was induced to take the same view (as Mr. Hincks), and to consider the labourer as excessively

* Parliamentary Return, 1859, part i., p. 239.

† *Ibid.*, p. 250.

‡ Buxton’s “Freedom and Slavery in the West Indies.”

§ Parliamentary Return, 1859, part i., p. 311.

|| *Ibid.*, part ii., p. 57.

underpaid ; but I am constrained to state, after some years' study of the subject, and after living in the colony in which confessedly the highest wages are paid, that an emancipated negro is unwilling to work for hire—he is unwilling to work continuously ; and the greater the equivalent he gets for his labour, the less can he be depended upon to perform that labour with regularity.”

Grenada.—Governor Kortright to Governor Hincks, in a despatch dated 22nd October, 1857, thus expresses himself:—

“I do not believe that more than 6,000 persons, or about one-fifth of the population, work regularly in the cane-fields. One gentleman, of very great experience and intelligence, says,—‘It is thought, out of a population of some 28,000, only between 4,500 and 5,000 work continually on sugar plantations, and the consequence is, the island ships 5,000 or 6,000 hogsheads of sugar, instead of 16,000 and 18 000 which it used to do.’”*

St. Vincent.—Extract of a despatch from Lieut.-Governor Eyre, to the Governor-in-chief, dated 15th April, 1858:—

“In conclusion, I would beg to point out, as strongly as I can, the great want of labour in St. Vincent, where so many fine estates and large tracts of available country are still lying waste, from the insufficiency of labour in the colony to cultivate them.”†

St. Lucia.—Govt.-Administrator Breen to Governor Hincks, under date of the 3rd of September, 1857, writes as follows:—

“No supply of labour at all adequate to the wants of the colony being obtainable from its internal resources, the remedy consists in immigration, in some shape or other.‡

Dominica, St. Kitt's, Montserrat, Tobago, Nevis, and the remaining smaller sugar-producing islands, are in their condition no way different to the preceding.§

Here we have the opinion of gentlemen of intelligence and education, high in office, with vast opportunities of appreciating the merits of the question, in all its bearings, with impartiality ; and whose only object in most cases is the execution of their duty towards the imperial government, coupled with the improvement of our colonies, to the wants of which, present and future, they are called upon to administer.

Labour being not only required, but loudly called for by our West Indian proprietors, it becomes incumbent on us to consider the emigrant best suited to the culture of the sugar-cane, and him that is most likely permanently to benefit a colony. Experience proves that

* Parliamentary Return, 1859, part ii., p. 80. † *Ibid.*, p. 130. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

§ The Bahamas, Tortola, Barbuda, the Bermudas, &c., cannot be said to be sugar-producing islands, in sufficient quantity to deserve notice.

the African is the best suited for those objects; and notwithstanding that the coolie is a great boon to the islands, he is objectionable as an immigrant in many respects.

The supply of coolie labour is principally drawn from Calcutta—the Bengalee being more suitable than the Bombay and Madras people; the planter, however, complains that physically the Bengal coolie is not up to his work, is very subject to illness, and with difficulty is acclimatized. The prevalence of cholera at Calcutta, and the predisposition on the part of the Asiatic to infection, and to generate the disorder when taken, are other grand objections and drawbacks to him. The Chinese coolie appears in many respects better adapted, as an immigrant, to the work and climate of the West Indies. It is urged against the Celestials, however, as immigrants, that the absence of their wives, their migratory habits, parsimony, and immorality, render them unfit subjects for a successful system of colonization.

We will now state the reasons which render the African negro more suitable—in fact, so infinitely superior, to the coolie, as an immigrant and an inhabitant of the West India Islands.

The African is physically stronger and more enduring than the coolie—not so easily affected by a change of climate, nor subject to disease. He more readily attaches himself to the soil, and in course of time amalgamates better with creole negroes; by marrying, or forming intimacies with the women of the country, he rarely makes an arrangement for a back passage to Africa—in short, he becomes a settler in the colony to which he migrates; and from these motives, and the preceding explanations, he promotes, in a greater ratio than the Asiatic coolie, the main object to be attained, and one it is desirable not to lose sight of as an element of colonial prosperity, viz., *An increase in the labouring population.*

The testimony of colonial officers in support of this view of the case is most valuable, and we make the following extracts of a correspondence upon the subject* :—

“ST. LUCIA, 3rd September, 1857.

“Of all descriptions of free labour, the one the best suited to these colonies is that of the native population; where that fails, the deficiency should, if practicable, be supplied by *African immigration.* The labourers of that

* Parliamentary Return, 1859, part ii., p. 9.

class, imported some years ago into St. Lucia, have proved a blessing *alike to themselves and to their employers*. In many instances they have realized little fortunes; and, where they have remained upon the estates, they have been the means of keeping up the little cultivation that is carried on there. No wonder, then, that our planters of French origin should look with feelings of jealousy, and even of despair, upon the successful efforts made by their neighbours of Martinique, to import Africans into that flourishing colony."

Such opinions, emanating from Mr. Breen, the administrator of the government of St. Lucia, are worthy of note.

We again quote from the report of the Trinidad Immigration Board * :—

"The African is much more to be depended upon for steady labour than the creole, but it must be according to his own mode."

With the evidence before us, we should reflectingly but boldly advocate an organized immigration of negroes from the west coast of Africa and our own possession of Sierra Leone, especially from those points where the Slave-trade is most energetically and successfully carried on at the present time, notwithstanding the supreme exertions on the part of the English Government to suppress it.†

A well-disposed but timid philanthropist, or weak-minded alarmist, might view such a proposal as pregnant with danger, and little better than "the traffic" itself—besides, being a tacit admission on the part of the British Government that emancipation had proved a failure; and, in the first objection, justly, if immigration was, in other words, *slaving*, clandestinely or inhumanely carried on, as in the case of the "Charles-et-Georges," or by repetitions of the nefarious practices enacted, and, perhaps, now enacting in and about the island of Madagascar, to the disgrace of the nationality of those individuals practising it, and in flagrant violation of treaties.

A treaty on the subject between the great naval powers would settle the difficulties which are supposed to surround the question of immigration.

We conceive it quite feasible to carry out a legitimate system of African immigration, without endangering the liberty of the subject, or outraging the feelings of the sincere and sensible philan-

* Parliamentary Return, 1859, part i., p. 314.

† The present *Immigration* from Sierra Leone hardly deserves that title, as the Africans landed in our West Indian colonies are merely the living cargoes of captured slavers—therefore, numerically, unimportant.

thropist. A poll tax, subject to adjustment by our Consuls at the respective ports of embarkation, might be permitted to the African chiefs on the coast, thus satisfying their cupidity, and furnishing valuable allies to the proposed enterprise. The difficulties which might in the onset be encountered, of inducing Africans to leave their shores for foreign lands, would, it is to be expected, under humane and kind treatment, the result of government provisions and official supervision, speedily disappear. We are aware, the objections which we have anticipated would be urged as a powerful argument against the scheme; but let our own and other well-disposed governments provide *by treaty*, the clauses of a code corrective of abuses, and then might we not look to private enterprise in our colonies for the elements of success?

The installation of Kroomen and other Africans conversant with the habits, customs, and language, of the various tribes (in the character of subordinate agents), would also prove a powerful auxiliary to the cause; and, by the general appearance and improved condition of the agents, demonstrate, to the satisfaction even of the benighted African, the advantages of comparative civilization over crude barbarism; and this, notwithstanding all that might be advanced in opposition, by those who assert, that insuperable difficulties exist in establishing African immigration; not so much from their actual existence, as from a tendency on the part of the objectors to confound the horrors of kidnapping with the legitimacy of immigration, and in the bare assertion that a disinclination to immigrate exists among the Africans themselves.

The following extract from a despatch of Governor Walker* appears to us peculiarly applicable here:—

* ST. VINCENT, August 1, 1857.

“The African is undoubtedly the natural cultivator of the soil in the West Indies. The destiny of these islands has perhaps been fulfilled. They may have already served the inscrutable purpose for which they were created, but with our material tendencies we are often not satisfied unless we can affect to comprehend or foresee the wise designs of the Creator; and that as we have been able to discover in *many* of His works, so may we be able to trace in *all* the beautiful and wonderful uses for which they have been brought into existence. In this frame of mind it is not very unpardonable to imagine that the vast tracts of rich and fertile land throughout these colonies and on the neighbouring main, which have never been cultivated, or even, as far as we

* Parliamentary Reports, 1859, part ii., p. 118.

know, traversed by man, may be still doomed to some more useful fate than their present luxuriant waste; and that in St. Vincent, for example, the fine forests and mountain woodlands of the interior were not made merely to attract a few passing showers for the scanty estates which dot a part of its coast.

“It is no idle dream that in the regeneration of Africa lies the destiny of these colonies. It is very likely that the work has been going on gradually for the last half century, that it may in fact have originated in the slave-trade itself with all its horrors, without which Africa might have been as unheeded, and the negro as little known as Patagonia and its inhabitants; and that the current of events having at last led to the growth and manufacture of tropical produce by free African labour, it now only remains for us to promote that intercourse which the white man has been as yet unable to open with the African continent—by extricating countless numbers of negroes from their present condition of darkness and slavery, and enabling them to resort to a country where light and freedom would be secured to them with a large future either in the acquisition of land, or in their return, with other sources of independence, to their native land.”

The views here expressed by Governor Walker, though sanguine, have our hearty concurrence, and we hope they enjoy the same amount of consideration in the minds of our readers; especially, as it must be admitted that these goodly aspirations are partially realized in the present traffic with Africa, and in the dawn of civilization now breaking upon the dark and cloudy intellect of the African savage in his native wilds.

In referring to the suppression of the Slave-trade, we would observe that it is simply idle on the part of those who assert that little good has attended the efforts of English cruisers on the coast, in this laudable though costly undertaking; still it may be a question for legislators to decide whether the expenditure of public monies wholly in one channel of prevention has been a judicious arrangement.

It is a pleasing fact, and one suited to our present purpose to notice, that if the horrors of the Slave-trade have been averted or mitigated, if traffic with Africa opened, cotton grown, palm oil expressed, and the imports and exports in that quarter of the globe daily increasing, these happy results are to be directly traced to the spirit, perseverance or philanthropy of the English people. From the same point of view we argue, that the greater the communication of Africans with whites, by trade and *immigration*, the greater the extent of civilization likely to attend that contact; on the other hand, neglect

the race, abandon such people to their own shifts and resources, and we may produce in our colonies another Hayti, with her absurdities and decadence—or a second Liberia, with a corresponding amount of misgovernment and incapacity exhibited in that state; or, what is more positive and to the point, by the toleration of such licence in other islands, as is countenanced both in the colonial legislature and in the native population of Jamaica; we may create *ad infinitum* communities and vices such as now reign in that island, so adverse to prosperity and unworthy the dignity of a British possession.*

A glance at Mr. Buxton's pamphlet† before we close. In page 52 it is asserted that no "ruinous" want of labour is at all manifest in our colonies. Now, if we have succeeded in proving any point of our subject, it is not only that labour is simply *in demand*, but that the safe existence of our West Indian colonies renders immigration an *imperative necessity*. The term "ruinous" is comparative in signification, and we shall decline to go into it; but of whatever elasticity the expression may be susceptible, we believe we have established the fact, that the want of labour at present *is ruinous—though not to the creole-negro labourer*.

Mr. Buxton,‡ in attributing the increase of trade and manufacture in the West Indies *exclusively* to the *energy* and improvement in the native population, is studiously silent on coolie immigration, devoting three or four lines to the bare mention of the subject, and less in reference to the West Indies than the Mauritius, the most flourishing *by immigration* of sugar colonies:—this silence is the more remarkable, as nearly the whole improvement descanted upon by that gentleman, is to be directly traced to the valuable addition thus procured to the labour market. So important an omission requires explanation; but we presume it will ultimately come out in the fact, that Mr. Buxton's views, in common with those of all members of the Anti-slavery Society, are opposed to the system—a system, be it nevertheless observed, almost universally admitted by the governors and superior officers in the West India Islands, as essential to prosperity, and to which some of the foregoing matter signally testifies.

* *Vide* Jamaica, in Trollope's "West Indies."

† Buxton's "Slavery and Freedom in the British West Indies."

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

Mr. Hincks, the Governor-in-Chief of the Windward Islands, was supposed to be averse to immigration, but, in point of fact, in his very objections he actually admits its utility! In other words, he states:—"Shew me that the want of labour is felt, and I will admit the necessity of foreign supply." Now, the present clamorous demands from the whole of the islands, save Barbadoes, for immigrants, establishes, in our opinion, the existence of a deficiency, and silences the objections raised.

If additional evidence was needed to set this question at rest, the dependence of British Guiana on foreign labour would prove of itself conclusive—as we are told, on competent authority, that the crop of 1858 was dependent upon the supply of coolie labour furnished in 1857: but it is needless to multiply examples—sufficient evidence has been adduced for our object, and with that conviction we close the consideration of this portion of the question.

In reviewing the possible consequences of African immigration to our colonies, it would be well to anticipate the effect on colonies now Spanish, under a different rule, although such a position may be considered a remote contingency by some, and barely probable by others. Still, it is no secret to Europeans, that American politicians of note assert that the island of Cuba must in a few years become a state of the Union; St. Domingo, it is further asserted by those who see into futurity, will inevitably be drawn into the destiny of her sister isle.* Under such an altered condition of things, the "breeding" slave states of America might possibly for a time prove sufficient to provide the newly-acquired state with slave labour; for it is no less notorious than true, that existing treaties with the United States, although forbidding the importation of slaves from "the coast," do not discountenance the traffic amongst Americans in their own states, nor the transportation of slaves from one state to

* We here pre-suppose that the Southerners in the United States obtain a majority in the Senate for the acquisition of Cuba in its integrity, as the question of its annexation would only be attempted by that party, on the condition of receiving with the island its enslaved population. The agitation of the question of annexation is not desired by the North—for, as a slave state, Cuba would increase the preponderance of the South—decreasing the influence of their political opponent proportionably. In the consideration of the question above, we conclude this point conceded by our readers. It might be argued that the North could equally well watch their opportunity,

another. It is therefore natural to suppose that Americans in possession of Cuba would draw their supplies (the consequence of increased and extraordinary demands for labour) from the present redundant (?) population of the slave states; but these resources exhausted, and slave labour still an imperative want of the planters, great evils, political and domestic, would inevitably ensue as a consequence, from the necessitous demands for slaves, and the impossibility of obtaining them, except in direct violation of present treaties, by the subjects of the United States.

If, on the other hand, proprietors of estates in Cuba (American or Spanish) could obtain negroes by a recognised and lawful system of immigration, at a considerable less cost than by slaving, as a matter of dollars and cents, (in the absence of a higher motive,) might not slavery be abandoned as unprofitable?

There is a class of restless, enthusiastic, but well-intentioned persons in this country, ever making themselves very wretched about the low standard and insufficient estimate of the negro in public esteem. "What *can* be done for the *poor negro*?" is a question continually asked; to this query we would reply, Not useless agitation at home, so much as practical effort abroad. If the Zoological Society will not class the negro amongst the great Caucasian family, nor even the members of the Anti-slavery Society admit him to the intimacy of their private circles, it is the fault of no one; and to any further inquiries as to his standing, we would simply suggest the propriety of ranking him where, by an all-

and make Cuba a free state—but where are the Americans who would recommend the acquisition of an island with such a free population as now degenerates Jamaica? It cannot be denied that the question is of difficult adjustment to Americans—and whether viewed as a national or federal one, is replete with argument and combustible matter to the opposing parties. One thing is, however, certain, that *at heart* the man of Massachusetts has no greater affection for the negro than the Virginian. Abolition in the United States is merely a *profession* and "*political capital*;" if slavery were an institution *necessary* to the Northern States, it would exist as well as in the South—John Bull *seldom* sacrifices his money to his principles or convictions; but Brother Jonathan *never*! Hence our assumption that Cuba, as an American state, bought with hard dollars, is more likely to be *Slave* than *Free*, although we recognize the right vested in each individual state, (since the abrogation of the "*Missouri Compromise*"), to frame its own laws on the subject of slavery.

wise Providence, he has been placed, fixing on him no faults or failings that are not his, neither ascribing to him virtues not in his possession. The negro is *one* of the varieties (perhaps the lowest) of the human race, having a defined status in the human family; it is useless, therefore, attempting to thrust him into positions assigned to others; we cannot amalgamate him with the Malay variety, nor can we elbow him into the Mongolian group, as such indiscreet philanthropy would be alike opposed to Cuvier, natural history, and common sense!

Let us elevate the black to the extent his mind is susceptible of impression, or his nature of improvement; if we would do so successfully, we should appreciate his attributes at their proper value, and with fairness; his requirements with precision, and with care. Native peculiarities and failings must be studied, as England knows to her cost; in the existing difficulty we should do well to consider those of the negro. In forming our judgment, let us not be led away by the cant phraseology of the day upon this subject, nor follow in the wake of those who, by converting the exception into the rule, seek in public opinion to erect a paper monument to the race, commemorative of virtues the highest and rarest, and qualities of the noblest kind.

In conclusion, let us indulge in the hope that the high and competent authorities upon whom the consideration of these difficult and momentous questions devolves, will, while legislating for the negro, profit by the past, as they ponder on the fable of "*The mild Hindoo.*"

January, 1860.



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