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THE
IMPORTANCE
OF THE
BRITISH COLONIES
IN THE
WEST INDIES;

THE DANGER OF A
GENERAL & IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION
OF THE NEGROES;
AND
A SKETCH OF A PLAN
FOR A SAFE AND GRADUAL EMANCIPATION, ON TERMS
FAVOURABLE TO ALL PARTIES,
AND WITHOUT ANY LOAN.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IN the following pages, I have endeavoured to state the value of the West India Colonies, clearly, temperately, and without bias or personality. The plan of emancipation which I suggest is moderate, and would be safe to the colonies, without imposing on the people at home any burden beyond the period necessary for carrying it into effect. I therefore venture, earnestly but respectfully, to call the attention of the public, and especially those immediately interested, to the statement and the outline of the plan.

A. BROUGH.

30th July, 1833.

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IMPORTANCE
OF THE
BRITISH COLONIES,
&c.

PREFATORY REMARKS.

“ Had *emancipation* to the Negroes been my object, or even my hope, I should not deserve the word ‘ humane ’ to be added to my views, but a shorter one, and that is the word “ mad. ’ ”—
WILBERFORCE, *Feb.* 28, 1805.

SUCH is the opinion which the earliest and perhaps the ablest advocate of the negro cause, expressed in his place in Parliament thirty years ago ; and as many improvements in the municipal laws of the colonies, enacted by the Legislature at home, and also by the legislative Assemblies of such Colonies as have that form of government, have been made during those years, we are borne out in the conclusion that, if Mr. Wilberforce were now in Parliament, he would characterize the project for an immediate, general, and indiscriminate emancipation of the negroes, as still more mad than the possibility of it appeared to him in 1805.

The repugnance to the measure which he thus publicly and solemnly avowed, was not founded on the apprehension of pecuniary loss, but on a full conviction that it would inevitably be followed by violence and outrage of the most lawless, and, to all parties, of the most ruinous character; and he would have deemed it but a sorry indication either of justice or of humanity, to fee the ten thousand whites (for that is about the number) with twenty millions, or 2000*l.* each on the average, in order that they might run the imminent risk,—the absolute certainty, of having their property destroyed, and themselves massacred, in the most summary, wanton, and savage manner. Yet that is the bargain proposed at the present time, and with the recollection of the dreadful outrages committed during the late insurrection in Jamaica still fresh in memory; and proposed, too, by those who, if they have one duty more solemnly, more awfully binding upon them than another, it is the duty of preserving the lives and properties of their fellow-subjects in peace and security, wheresoever they may reside, and in what lawful calling soever they may be engaged. That is one of the most melancholy effects of that “strange delusion,” which, under the name of Political Economy, labours to reduce not only justice and equity, but all the passions and feelings of human nature, to the one cold and narrow standard of pounds, shillings and pence.

It may seem singular why opinion (for it is mere opinion and not knowledge, or even reasoning,) should have degenerated so strangely during a period when, as we are told, wisdom has been making advances so unprecedented. The only solution of the enigma is, that the opinion on the slave question has never been founded on the proper knowledge; and that consequently, it has become more erroneous, in proportion as it has been more widely extended. Its course has been like that of a river, the feeders of which rise in the hills, and which bring down fresh mud and rubbish at every stream, so that the river becomes more and more tainted as it runs, and the end of it is alternate inundation and marsh, equally unprofitable and equally pestilent.

The emancipationists have always taken a partial view of the state of the negro. They have dwelt constantly upon the single fact, or rather upon the *mere name* of "slavery" alone. They have magnified and multiplied the hardships; but they have altogether overlooked the advantages. They have done worse; they have overlooked all the physical circumstances in which the Negro is placed, as well as all the peculiarities of his moral and social condition. They have also mixed up the question of *slave trade* with that of *slave treatment*; and charged upon the Colonists atrocities which were perpetrated by the people of the mother country, and which have long been put an end to by the

legislature. Even such of them, or their agents, as have visited the colonies have not gone thither for the discovery of the truth,—they have gone to seek proofs of assertions, in which they were schooled beforehand. And, in order to find a justification of those assertions, they not only overlooked the enjoyments of which the Negroes were in the actual and every day possession, and the still more important fact of all the feelings and habits of the Negroes being in accordance with that system, and difficult to be changed in proportion as the passions of those people were ardent, and their minds uninformed as to any other system; but they wrested the physical state of the country, and, as it were, suborned the elements in order to accomplish their ends.

That, in equity, compensation in money should be given to the colonists for the loss they may sustain by the measure, if carried into effect, is unquestionably true. But who can tell beforehand what the amount of that loss may be? The price which the Negroes would bear in the present market is not the standard: the true standard is the same quantity of labour performed as readily and regularly, and at the same expense; and no man can tell how that may be after a change has taken place, of which no man can guess the extent or the consequences. It may be the destruction of all the property, the murder of all the Whites, and the total loss of the Colonies, not alone to Britain as possessions, but to the

civilized world, as a productive portion of the globe; and would twenty millions, two hundred millions, or any sum whatever, be an adequate compensation for that?

Let any one put the case of the manufacturers, including the production of food, as well as of every thing else, in this country, and suppose that the popular clamour which, a short time ago, raged against machinery, should have been prolonged and refined into a legislative measure, for the immediate destruction of all the implements of industry; and then let him ask himself if the cost price of these things would have been any thing like a compensation to the owners, the nation, or the world. It is easy to see that, in that case, there could have been no compensation,—no means of repairing the wrong done; and that case is far more simple and free from danger than that of immediate emancipation.

Indeed, that measure would be loosening from all restraint a people who, upon the hypothesis of the emancipationists themselves, have no knowledge of orderly society, or of the principles upon which it depends. If it be true that the sugar colonies in the West Indies could be more cheaply and profitably cultivated by free labourers than by the present system of slaves, then it is clear that the Colonists would require no pecuniary compensation on the passing of the measure of emancipation. The question of comparative cheapness between

the labour of freemen and the labour of slaves, is not only not decided, but the most eminent writers, including Adam Smith, maintain that cultivation by slaves is more costly than cultivation by freemen.

Now if that be the case, and in as far as the superior candour and penetration of those who hold the doctrine is concerned it is much more probable than the other, it goes far to prove that without the labour of slaves, or in other words, that of men engaged and bound to their master for life, the culture of the Colonies could not be carried on at all. If free labour had been practicable, the fact of its being cheaper would have brought it into practice. On many parts of the continent, that term of engagement (for the difference between an agricultural labourer in England and the West Indies is a mere question of time) was general till very lately; and the time is not long past when colliers, salt-boilers, and some other trades in the northern parts of this country, were as long and as completely bound to their masters—their *proprietors*, in fact—as the Negroes in the Colonies.

That the culture of the West Indies, and especially the culture of sugar, which is by far the most important branch, could not be carried on by white people, until a race had been bred by successive generations, inured to the climate, is certain; and it is also certain that the destruction of human life before that result (if practicable at all?) could be

arrived at, would be dreadful. In the sugar plantations, the Negroes are in their natural climate; and therefore labour there is less unnatural, and consequently less severe to them than mere existence is to Europeans, and would be to their descendants, until they should acquire that physical adaptation to the heat, which the Negro races have been acquiring for thousands of years.

But if the Whites could not continue the cultivation of the West Indies, there is much reason to believe that the emancipated Negroes, if the whole were emancipated at once, would not. The single instance of the island of Haiti may be held as conclusive on that point. In the year 1789, that island exported about 150 million pounds of sugar; in 1825, the export was about two thousand pounds, or one-seventy-five-thousandth part of the quantity; and now, sugar, when obtained at all, is an article of import there. Now the Negroes of Haiti have not only the stimulus of the wages of labour, but they have the whole proprietorship and profits; and if these, jointly, have proved not to be enough to stimulate them to work in one place, why should one,—and that, perhaps, by far the less powerful one,—be sufficient stimulus in another place.

Upon the most favourable view that can be taken of the case, therefore,—that is, supposing no massacre or personal violence,—the destruction of the West Indies, the total loss of their produce to the world, is the most probable effect of an immediate

and general emancipation. Let us see to what the loss would amount.

IMPORTANCE OF THE COLONIES.

The sugar colonies, which are those most deeply involved in the question of emancipation, are—

West India Islands,

Jamaica,	St. Christopher's,
Antigua,	St. Lucia,
Barbados,	St. Vincent,
Dominica,	Tortola,
Grenada,	Trinidad,
Montserrat,	The Bahamas ;
Nevis,	

on the continent of South America,

Demerara, Berbice ; and

in the Indian Ocean, to the east of Africa,

Mauritius.

Let us consider the value of these Colonies to this country, or to those who are connected with it.

The following is an abstract from the authentic documents :

State of ships employed in the trade to the West Indies, in the year 1830 :—

901 ships outward bound, being of the burthen

of 248,700 tons' measurement, (navigated with 14,128 British seamen), the value thereof at least is 15*l.* per ton, and amounts, on the foregoing number of ships, to 3,730,500*l.*

The British and Irish produce and manufacture, exported to the West Indies in the year 1830, was of the real value, in sterling money, of 2,999,467*l.*

966 ships returned, in the year 1830, from the West Indies, being of the burthen of 271,061 tons, navigated with 14,625 British.

State of the West India produce imported in the year 1830 :—

THE QUANTITY.

Coffee	27,489,927 lbs.
Molasses	249,426 cwts.
Rum	6,752,862 gallons.
Sugar	4,397,955 cwts.

The duty received on West India produce (not including the Mauritius) in the year 1830, amounted to 7,500,000*l.*

The importance of the possession of the West Indies to Great Britain, may be best appreciated by the foregoing official extracts from the parliamentary returns of the year 1830, showing the state and amount of the trade carried on between the colonies and the mother country.

CONDITION AND TREATMENT OF THE NEGROES.

That the Negroes in the West Indies are in that miserable condition, or subjected to that cruel treatment which is sometimes alleged, is substantially disproved by the fact of their being in possession of more wealth than English labourers. But as, though the opinion that the Negroes in the West Indies are treated with wanton cruelty, or with cruelty at all, is not only contrary to the fact, but contrary to probability, as being in direct opposition to the interest of the planters, yet, as it is kept before the public by an organized and very active system, the number of false assertors (they are *not witnesses*) connected with which give it the semblance of truth to the simple, a few additional words may not be improper.

Among the multitudes of petitions that have of late years loaded the tables of the Houses of Parliament, there is not one that can be regarded as a spontaneous emanation from the persons by whom it is signed; and therefore these petitions no more represent the sober opinions of the people of England, or of any part of that people, than they do of the people of China. Still, upon the old principle, that if a falsehood is told with sufficient confidence, a sufficient number of times, it will obtain the same confidence and produce the same effect as a truth, the people give a passive consent to the story of the cruel treatment of the Negroes, just as they do to the tale of any other vulgar error.

That there were cruelties in the slave trade is true ; but, as has been hinted, that was a trade of the mother country to which the colonists were opposed. Also, as long as the trade continued, or the majority of the Negroes were of those supplied by that trade, severe treatment was absolutely unavoidable. These Negroes had come from a land of idleness, assassination, and cannibalism, their only permanent passion was revenge ; and they were constantly lying in wait to wreak upon the planters the evils which they had met with at the time of their capture or sale in Africa, and in the ships of the slave-traders.

All who have been in the Colonies, and examined the condition of society there intimately and candidly, concur in representing the Negroes as well-treated, and when they are not worked upon by others, contented, cheerful, and happy. So contented, that many who could purchase their freedom ten times over, will not do it, and others to whom it is offered as a boon, beg that it may not be inflicted on them.

The following, which is solemn and authentic evidence, may be contrasted with the assertions.

“ Extracts from the Minutes of Evidence before a Committee of the House of Lords.

“ Major-General Sir JOHN KEANE, K.C.B. examined.

“ Have you an interest in property in the West Indies ? ” — “ None whatever.”

“ When you were in Jamaica had you occasion to visit various parts of the island ?”—“ Yes.”

“ Was your attention directed at that time to the state of the slave population ?”—“ From the number of times that I have gone through the country it certainly did fall to my lot to observe their state in very, very many instances. Living a good deal with the inhabitants, and going to several of the properties, I had an opportunity of seeing them.”

“ Did those opportunities afford you the means of judging of the state and condition generally of the Negroes ?”—“ I should say yes; I have been for months together upon a tour through the country.”

“ Are the remarks that you have made concerning the houses and the provision grounds arising out of your own personal observation, or only what has been stated to you ?”—“ Arising out of my own personal observation, from having visited both frequently.”

“ In regard to provisions, have you had any opportunity of knowing in what way the Negroes are supplied who have not provision grounds !”—“ As far as relates to Jamaica, they have all provision grounds except those Negroes who are attached to people in the towns, and they are provisioned weekly by an allowance either in money or in kind.”

“ Did it come to your knowledge that any complaints have arisen on the part of the Negroes as to their supply of food in that way ?”—“ Never.”

“ Do you think they would be likely to complain if there was any occasion ?”—“ I am sure they would.”

“ They would not be afraid of complaining ?”—“ No ; they are most tenacious and jealous of their rights, even amongst themselves, when their provisions are issued, to the last scruple.”

“ Have the Negroes the entire benefit of the produce of their provision grounds ?”—“ Certainly ; I have always understood so.”

“ Can you give the Committee any information with regard to property possessed by Negroes ?”—“ I have heard they possess property such as money, and that they have it in the hands of either their proprietor or the person who acts in the name of that proprietor, called an attorney ; and I know they have cows and animals of different descriptions, hogs and asses.”

“ Had you any reason to believe that the Negroes felt themselves insecure in the possession of any of their property ?”—“ Never.”

“ Did you never know an instance where that property was interfered with by the owner of the slave ?”—“ I never heard of any such interference.”

“ The situation you filled during part of the time you were there probably would have brought to your knowledge any circumstances of complaint of ill-treatment, want of provisions, clothing, or any other matter constituting a proper ground of complaint ?”—“ Yes, I should think it would if it ex-

isted ; but I never have by any accident heard it, nor do I think such a thing could have happened in Jamaica without my knowing it, for every two or three months I made a tour of the island."

" Would there have been any backwardness on the part of the Negroes in stating to you, or so as that it should reach you, any complaint they might have ?"—" No, I think not ; they were very ready in making known their grievances."

" Does the Negro work as many hours in the day as the labourer in England, taking the periods of long and short days in this country ?"—" I should say certainly not near as much ; one man in England would do more than ten Negroes."

" Have they their regular hours of rest during the day ?"—" Yes ; either three quarters of an hour or an hour ; breakfast an hour, and two hours at dinner ; the two hours are clear, besides their going and coming to the spot they may be at work at."

" From the situation you have described yourself to have occupied in Jamaica, can you state to the committee whether complaints of Slaves, in cases where they seek redress, are properly attended to ?"—" I should say decidedly yes ; during the time I was there, in either capacity, as a General or Lieutenant-Governor, in going through the island, I never heard a complaint, nor was any one made to me personally."

" Do you think that any cruel proprietor of slaves,

or any cruel manager, would, in the present state of society in Jamaica, be tolerated?"—"Decidedly not."

"Can you assign any reason but custom for the severe work they do at present?"—"I do not call it severe."

"You are aware, of course, that Slaves receive no wages from their master!"—"They know very well that they are the property of their masters; they work for their own protection and for their existence, and are well taken care of, are well fed, and are little worked, I will be bold to maintain; and they are in sickness and in health taken care of, and are well clad; and what more can they expect? Those points have come under my own observation."

"Do the Negroes in Jamaica in general look healthy and well?"—"They are a magnificent race of people; very much so."

"Do you know from your own observation, or have you ever heard it said, that the Negroes appear to be in better condition during the crop time than at any other season of the year?"—"I do not know that I have ever heard that comparison made, but they are as fine a race of people as I ever saw in my life."

"Are they cheerful?"—"Always singing. It is a most extraordinary thing they are always singing, and seem excessively delighted; and the task-work, which is the heaviest work—which they

claim as a matter of right, for they get a larger proportion of victuals—even in that they are more happy than at other times, which is digging cane-holes.”

“ When they work in gangs do you mean to say that they display this hilarity and cheerfulness ?”—
“ They do invariably, cracking their jokes and singing from one end to the other.”

DANGER OF IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION.

The experience of all ages and nations proves that there is always the most imminent danger in changing at once the political condition of the labouring classes. So great indeed is that danger, that the practical mischief thence arising is apt to be far heavier than that which is consequent upon a total revolution in the general politics and state of the country. And the reason of that is easily seen : in a general revolution the whole frame of the society is changed, and though the change be, as it very often is, for the worse, yet, the relations of the several ranks and classes are always in so far preserved. If, however, a great revolution takes place in the condition of the labouring classes, without a corresponding change in the others, the frame of society is torn asunder, the relations upon which public morality and the preservation of the public peace depend, are destroyed ; and to suppose that internal anarchy of the most disastrous and ruinous

character should not be the necessary result, would be to suppose that human nature is some thing different from what universal experience has hitherto shown it to be.

The Negroes are themselves as ignorant of the state into which they would be brought by the madness of a general emancipation, as the abettors of that project are of the characters and present condition of the Negroes. Being found in all the requisites of their maintenance by their masters, they have none of that prudence and foresight, which people who are thrown upon their own resources learn by experience. Many of them do accumulate property, but the majority spend much of the intervals of labour in noisy mirth. They know, in fact, no hardship but labour; and they have no wish but the gratification of their passions, among which the passion of revenge is one of the strongest, and most easily excited in the deadliest possible manner. Hence the only notion that they can have of their condition being benefited by emancipation, or by any political project whatever, is that of being absolved from labour, and possessing themselves of property. Emancipation can of itself do neither for them; and, thus disappointed, they would perpetrate outrages of the most dreadful nature. It is true, that the sword of civilization, if determinedly drawn, would prove too much for the club of the demi-savage; but after the property of

the Colonists were destroyed, and their mangled bodies given to the fowls of heaven, it would not be worth deciding whether the better alternative would be the extirpation of the Negroes, or leaving them to return to their human sacrifices and the feast of the dead, as they have done in Haiti.

The measure which has been proposed, of preparing the Negroes for emancipation by apprenticing them for seven years to their masters, would put off, but would not remove, the danger of a general emancipation. At the end of the seven years they would be all emancipated at once; and not only that, but there would be some chance of the seven years being spent in framing plans of revolt and insurrection, to be put in execution when the day of general emancipation arrived.

PLAN
FOR
THE GRADUAL AND SAFE ABOLITION
OF
COLONIAL SLAVERY
WITHOUT
ANY LOAN
OR
PERMANENT BURDEN TO THE COUNTRY.

A FREE emancipation of 30,000 slaves, to take place on the 31st of December, 1834, upon payment of a fair compensation to the proprietors, for the labour of the slaves so liberated.

Another free emancipation of 30,000 to take place on the 31st of December, 1837, upon due payment of a fair compensation, as in the first instance.

A further emancipation of 30,000, to take place on the 31st of December, 1840; and the emancipation of a like number on the 31st of December every third year thereafter, until the whole were

emancipated, a fair compensation being paid to the proprietors in every instance.

The funds for indemnifying the proprietors could be obtained without any loan or burden to the country at home, or the colonies, after this plan had been carried into effect, by the following very simple means :—

An emancipation duty of one halfpenny per pound weight to be imposed upon all sugar imported into Great Britain from the West Indies, or from any other part of the world. That duty to commence from the day that the edict for a gradual emancipation should be published, and to remain in force until the whole of the slaves should have been emancipated, and a fair compensation paid to all the proprietors.

That trifling emancipation duty would, without any loan whatever, pay the whole amount that would be required; and an emancipation so gradual and so safe for all parties would thus be ensured, at an individual cost of only a few pence each to the people of the United Kingdom, without entailing upon posterity any burden whatsoever.

That the funds thus raised would be perfectly

sufficient for the purpose, will appear from the following official documents :—

1. *Statement of*

The quantity of raw sugar charged with home consumption-duty in the year 1830. Other years are nearly the same.—

British-plantation	4,145,733 cwts.
Mauritius	435,010
East India	135,901
	<hr/>
	4,716,644 ¹

4,716,644 at a halfpenny per pound

weight, is, per annum £1,100,549

In three years £3,301,647

2. *Estimate of*

Compensation to the proprietors of 30,000 slaves, to be freely emancipated on the 31st December, 1834 :—

1st. 30,000 slaves on the 31st Decem-

ber, 1834, estimated on an average of

40*l.* each £1,200,000

2d. 30,000, on the 31st December, 1837 1,200,000

£2,400,000

¹ Taken from the Custom House returns.

Charges.

Poor's rate for the benefit of old and infirm persons, from 31st December, 1834, to 31st December, 1837—three years, at 100,000 <i>l.</i> per annum . . .	£300,000
Various charges—instructions to the slaves, drawbacks, &c. estimated at 80,000 <i>l.</i> per annum—three years . . .	240,000
	<hr/>
	£2,940,000
Balance left in hand on 31st December, 1837	361,647
	<hr/>
	£3,301,647

The duty from the time of publishing the Edict of the gradual emancipation to 31st December, 1834, must be applied to the Emancipation fund. This will be required in aid of the first payment to the proprietors.

Should 45,000 slaves be required for emancipation every three years, it may easily be done, by making the duty three farthings per pound weight on all sugar imported. Or even 60,000 may be accomplished by increasing the duty to one penny per pound.

Should either of these be considered as too slow in its operation, the following modification of the plan might greatly accelerate the final result:—

An emancipation duty of three farthings upon every pound weight of sugar imported into the United Kingdom, from what part soever of the world the same may be imported, would, in three years, purchase the freedom of 80,000 slaves, at 40*l.* each, amounting in all to 3,200,000*l.*

A sum to that amount to be due on the 31st of December, 1834, and to be payable in London as soon thereafter as possible, upon production of satisfactory proofs that 80,000 slaves had been freely emancipated in terms of the Edict.

A second emancipation of 80,000 to take place on the 31st of December, 1837, and a third, of the like number, to take place on the 31st of December, 1840.

By this means, it is evident, that 240,000 out of the estimated 800,000 slaves would be freely emancipated, and a fair compensation made to their owners, within the short period of six years after the plan came into operation.

The remaining number would of course be emancipated in the same proportion of 80,000 every

three years, until the whole of the Negro population of the colonies had become free; and by means of a very moderate payment, very generally distributed, and lasting only during the time the measure were carrying into effect, the question would be for ever set at rest, the danger of an immediate and general emancipation avoided, and seven millions and a half, which otherwise would be endangered by the general emancipation, and required for the interest of 20,000,000*l.* loan for that purpose, would be saved in perpetuity to the British public.

THE END.



