





REMARKS

ON

EMIGRATION TO JAMAICA:

ADDRESSED TO THE

COLOURED CLASS

OF THE

UNITED STATES.

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REMARKS.

SOME of the coloured people of the United States having recently emigrated to Trinidad and Guiana, the Legislature of Jamaica, desirous of affording the same encouragement to such persons as might prefer going to that island, passed an act, on the 11th April last, providing the means of a free passage, and containing such other regulations as appeared best calculated effectually to secure the comfort of the emigrants while at sea, and their protection after arrival, until they should get into employment. As commissioner, appointed under that act by the Governor, and instructed to proceed to England, but in the first instance to visit the United States, and ascertain if any portion of the free coloured population would be induced to emigrate, and if so, to make the necessary arrangements, I deem it proper to place before those interested some particulars respecting that island, for their guidance.

GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION OF JAMAICA.

Jamaica lies between the 17th and 18th degrees of north latitude, and precisely in the same parallel of longitude with New-York, consequently bears due south of it. It is distant from New-York about 1,400 miles, and the usual average passage is about 16 days. Communication with the island is frequent, seldom a week passes without a vessel sailing from New-York, Philadelphia, or Baltimore.

EXTENT.

The island is of large extent, about 150 miles in length, and 45 in breadth, containing 6,400 square miles, of which, perhaps,

about one third never has been cultivated. Much of this land, formerly patented, has become forfeited, and no doubt would be resumed by the Crown, for the purpose of being re-granted, or sold at a low rate, in the event of additional population rendering such a step expedient. The present price of land may be stated at from 3 to 30 dollars per acre, according to locality and circumstances.

POPULATION.

The slaves emancipated in 1834 amounted to 311,700. No census having been ever taken of the other classes, the number of these are unknown, and have been variously estimated; but I cannot be far wrong, in stating them at 100,000 in 1834, making the whole population, at that time, 411,700: say 311,700 slaves, 70,000 free coloured persons, and 30,000 white, being in the proportion of about 14 coloured persons to one white.

CLIMATE.

In the climate of Jamaica there is an agreeable diversity; warm in the low lands, temperate in the more elevated situations, and so cool in the mountains that fires are agreeable in the evenings, and blankets to sleep under at night. Since freedom took place, some of the coloured people in the mountains have removed to the low lands, on account of the cold. But although the low lands of Jamaica are warm, they are not unhealthy. From having been long cultivated and effectually drained, they are now become drier, and perhaps less fertile than formerly; but on the other hand, they are decidedly more healthy, and in this respect, coloured emigrants from the United States have nothing to fear by a removal to Jamaica. The thermometer ranges at mid-day from 72 in winter to 84 in summer, in the low lands; but even at the warmest season of the year, the heat of the day is tempered by a refreshing sea-breeze, and the nights are rendered pleasant by the land-breeze from the mountains—very gentle, but at the same time so cool as to render a blanket covering acceptable. What are called the spring and fall rains, take place in the months of May and

October, when we have occasionally one or two days of continued rain, followed by showery weather, which does not, however, much retard labour in the fields. Jamaica has been formerly visited with hurricanes, but they are now fortunately of rare occurrence; there has been none since 1831, and then not so severe as to do any serious injury.

WATER.

The island is most plentifully supplied with water of the purest quality, in consequence of which the name which it bore when discovered by Columbus, and which it continues to retain, is said to signify "island of springs." Almost every gully or little glen has its crystal streamlet gliding through it. So very abundant are these, that over the greater part of the country every house and cottage has water within a short and convenient distance. Dug wells are unknown, except about the vicinity of Kingston. Thus also the sugar and other mills are generally turned by water-streams.

GENERAL APPEARANCE.

To give an idea of the striking appearance of this magnificent island, I shall quote a brief but graphic description given of it by two American travellers, Messrs. Thome and Kimball, in 1837. Page 266.

"On landing in Jamaica, we pushed onward in our appropriate inquiries, scarcely stopping to cast a glance at the towering mountains, with their cloud-wreathed tops, and the valleys where sunshine and shade sleep side by side—at the frowning precipices, made more awful by the impenetrable forest-foliage which shrouds the abysses below, leaving the impression of an ocean-depth—at the broad lawns and magnificent savannahs glowing in verdure and sunlight—at the princely estates and palace mansions—at the luxuriant cultivation and the sublime solitude of primeval forests, where trees of every name, the mahogany, the boxwood, the rosewood, the cedar, the palm, the fern, the bamboo, the cocoa, the breadfruit, the mango, the almond, all grow in wild confusion, interwoven with a dense tangled underwood."

PRODUCTIONS.

The great staples of the island are sugar, rum, and coffee ; but many articles of minor importance are also raised and exported, such as ginger, arrowroot, pimento, and various descriptions of dye and cabinet woods. Extensive grass farms (called pens) are also cultivated for the rearing of horses, mules, asses, cattle, and sheep ; and the smaller class of cultivators derive considerable advantage by raising provisions and vegetables, pigs and poultry, for the internal consumption of the island. These articles always commanded a ready sale, and have considerably advanced in price since freedom ; they were raised principally by the slaves, who have given less attention to their grounds since they came to receive money wages. This branch of industry would itself afford profitable employment to industrious persons from the United States, particularly to such as could carry a little capital with them. From the late change, there are many small settlements in the market that may be purchased exceedingly cheap, and an acre of land cultivated in yams will give a return scarcely to be credited in this country ; often to the extent of \$150 for one crop.

CHURCHES AND SCHOOLS.

Religious toleration to the fullest extent prevails in Jamaica, and it is most amply provided with places of worship and schools. The island is divided into 21 parishes, and the various denominations of clergymen number about 200, or ten to each parish, so that over the whole country, with few exceptions, the people are able to attend public worship every Sabbath day, at a moderate and convenient distance from their houses. Schools are equally numerous, or even more so ; education is within the reach of every person, of every degree, who desires it.

RATE OF WAGES AND MODE OF LABOUR.

With regard to the rate of plantation wages, or remuneration paid for labour, it is impossible for me to give such specific information as I could wish, in consequence of the many dif-

ferent ways in which the work is carried on. For instance, in the cutting of canes, some do it by daily wages—others by the cart load—others by a given quantity of cane juice by the day, and others again by the acre ; some paying one rate and some another. So, also, in the cleaning of the cane fields, some do it by the day, some by a task measured off, while the more general mode is, for one of the people on the property to undertake the field by contract, at from 2 to 5 dollars per acre, according to circumstances ; and then he finds his own hands to do the work. In Jamaica, the larger extent of country and greater diversity of the fields, render it far more difficult to adopt a uniform task than in the smaller islands. There is also another difficulty ; in most of the other colonies, the labourers under the slave system had their food provided for them ; while in Jamaica they were permitted to occupy land to an unlimited extent, and time was allowed them to cultivate their own provisions. In this way they not only raised enough to serve themselves, but to supply the whole of the town markets throughout the island, by which many of the more industrious acquired very considerable wealth. These grounds, which continue to be held by the people, have been, since freedom took place, a source of sad contention between them and the proprietors, tending greatly to increase the difficulty of regulating the rate of wages ; the proprietors seeking a reduction in lieu of rent, and the labourers refusing this, or differing about the amount. The usual rate paid for labour by the day, is 4 bits or $37\frac{1}{2}$ cents, for which a very small amount of work is reluctantly performed. The only description of labour universally done by task, is that of opening cane holes, at about the rate of 70 for half a dollar ; this the labourers usually finish by 1 o'clock ; occasionally they perform double tasks and earn a dollar, but 50 cents may be stated as the amount which a man doing a fair, honest day's work, may, with ease and comfort to himself, regularly earn all the year round, if he desires. Then he has the further advantage of constant light employment in weeding canes, tending cattle, or otherwise employing any of the younger branches of his family, who may wish for it. Common mechanics earn from half a dollar to a dollar, according to their abilities. These are about the rates of wages that may be calculated

upon in Jamaica, with the further advantages of a free house and garden, and having medical attendance provided. The rate of wages spoken of, *as by the day*, may appear small in this country, but it is to be recollected that the employment is constant and steady all the year round, and that people's wants in a tropical climate are much easier supplied than where they have a winter's cold to contend with ; every visitor to Jamaica has admitted that the comforts enjoyed by the labouring class of that island are exceeded by none in the world.

POLITICAL PRIVILEGES.

But the point of view in which Jamaica stands pre-eminently inviting to the coloured class of the United States, is in the free and full enjoyment of those rights and privileges to which their white brethren justly attach so much importance. I saw a beautiful flag borne triumphantly along Broadway on the 4th of July with this motto, "*Where liberty dwells, there is my country.*" What heart but responds to this sentiment ? It is true, these rights will be equally secured to emigrants going to the other British colonies, but the free constitution of Jamaica is more in unison with the liberal form of government in which they have, in their native land, anxiously, but in vain, sought a participation. But another and very strong attraction to Jamaica presents itself in the high rank which the coloured class have already attained in that island. Forming a very numerous body, many of them well-educated, and possessed of considerable property, they had pressed forward and obtained for themselves an entire equality of rights with the white people, some years before slave emancipation took place. Following the removal of legal disabilities, prejudice of colour rapidly died away, and it is almost impossible for any one who has not seen it, to form an estimate of the vast change which the last ten years have brought about. To show the position in which the coloured class of Jamaica now stand, I shall refer to an authority upon which I have accidentally put my hand since my arrival in this city, and which will be received with more confidence as coming from disinterested witnesses. I allude to a work entitled, "*Emancipation in the West Indies ; A Six Months' Tour in Antigua, Barbadoes, and Jamaica, in the year*

1837," by Jas. A. Thome and I. Horace Kimball, published by the American Anti-Slavery Society, New-York, 1839, and from which I have already made a short extract. The introduction states, that Messrs. Thome and Kimball were "deputized by the Society to visit the West Indies, to make the proper investigations, and that hastily calling at some of the other British islands, they made Antigua, Barbadoes, and Jamaica successively the object of their deliberate and laborious study." On the subject of schools and education, they give the following satisfactory facts, page 272.

"SCHOOLS IN KINGSTON.

"We visited the Wolmer Free School, the largest and oldest in the island. The whole number of scholars is five hundred. It is under the charge of Mr. Reid, a venerable Scotchman, of scholarship and piety. All colours are mingled in it promiscuously. We saw the infant school department examined by Mr. R. There were nearly one hundred and fifty children of every hue, from the jettiest black to the fairest white; they were thoroughly intermingled, and the ready answers run along the ranks from black to white, from white to brown, from brown to pale, with undistinguished vivacity and accuracy. We were afterwards conducted into the higher department, where lads and misses from nine to fifteen were instructed in the various branches of academic education. A class of lads, mostly coloured, were examined in arithmetic; they wrought several sums in pounds, shillings, and pence, currency, with wonderful celerity.

"Among other things which we saw in that school, we shall not soon forget, having seen a curly-headed negro lad of twelve, examining a class of white young ladies in scientific history.

"Some written statements and statistical tables were furnished us by Mr. Reid, which we subjoin:—

" ' KINGSTON, May 13th, 1837.

" ' DEAR SIR,—I delayed answering your queries, in hopes of being able to give you an accurate list of the number of schools

in Kingston, and pupils under tuition, but have not been able completely to accomplish my intention. I shall now answer your queries in the order you propose them:—1st *Ques.* How long have you been teaching in Jamaica? *Ans.* Thirty-eight years in Kingston. 2d *Q.* How long have you been master of Wolmer's Free School? *A.* Twenty-three years. 3d *Q.* What is the number of coloured children now in the school? *A.* Four hundred and thirty. 4th *Q.* Was there any opposition to their admission at first? *A.* Considerable opposition the first year, but none afterwards. 5th *Q.* Do they learn as rapidly as the white children? *A.* As they are more regular in their attendance, they learn better. 6th *Q.* Are they as easily governed? *A.* Much easier. 7th *Q.* What proportion of the school are children of apprentices? *A.* Fifty. 8th *Q.* Do their parents manifest a desire to have them educated? *A.* In general they do. 9th *Q.* At what age do the children leave your school? *A.* Generally between twelve and fourteen. 10th *Q.* What employment do they chiefly engage in upon leaving you? *A.* The boys go to various mechanic trades, to counting-houses, attorneys' offices, clerks to planting attorneys, and others become planters; the girls, sempstresses, mantuamakers, and a considerable portion tailloresses, in Kingston and throughout Jamaica, as situations offer.

“ I am, dear sir, yours, respectfully,

“ E. REID.’

“The following table will show the average number of the respective classes, white and coloured, who have attended Wolmer's Free School, in each year, from 1814 to the present time:—

		“ White Child'n.	Col'd Child'n.	Total.
“ Average number in	1814	87		87
“ “	1815	111	3	114
“ “	1816	129	25	154
“ “	1817	146	36	182
“ “	1818	155	38	193
“ “	1819	136	57	193
“ “	1820	116	78	194

		" White Child'n.	Col'd Child'n.	Total.
" Average number in	1821	118	122	240
" "	1822	93	167	260
" "	1823	97	187	280
" "	1824	94	196	290
" "	1825	89	185	274
" "	1826	93	176	269
" "	1827	92	156	248
" "	1828	88	152	240
" "	1829	79	192	271
" "	1830	88	194	282
" "	1831	88	315	403
" "	1832	90	360	450
" "	1833	93	411	504
" "	1834	81	420	501
" "	1835	85	425	510
" "	1836	78	428	506
" "	1837	72	430	502

"With regard to the *comparative intellect* of white and coloured children, Mr. Reid gives the following valuable statement :—

"For the last thirty-eight years I have been employed in this city in the tuition of children of all classes and colours, and have no hesitation in saying, that the children of colour are equal, both in conduct and ability, with the white. They have always carried off more than their portion of prizes, and at one examination, out of seventy prizes awarded, sixty-four were obtained by children of colour."

"Mr. R. afterwards sent us the table of the number of schools in Kingston, alluded to in the foregoing communication. We insert it here, as it affords a view of the increase of schools and scholars since the abolition of slavery.

1831, No. of Schools,	85	No. of Scholars,	4,088
1832 " "	83	" "	3,738
1836 " "	109	" "	7,707
1837 " "	118	" "	8,753

"We also visited the Union School, which has been

established for some time in Kingston. All the children connected with it, about one hundred and fifty, are, with two exceptions, black or coloured. The school is conducted generally on the Lancasterian plan. We examined several of the boys in Arithmetic. We put a variety of questions to them to be worked out on the slate, and the reasons of the process to be examined as they went along; all which they executed with great expertness. There was a jet black boy whom we selected for a special trial. We commenced with simple rules, and went through them one by one, together with the compound rules of Reduction and Practice, propounding questions and examples in each of them, which were entirely new to him; to all of them he gave prompt and correct replies. He was only thirteen years old, and we can aver we never saw a boy of that age, in any of our common schools, that exhibited a fuller and clearer knowledge of the science of numbers.

“In general, our opinion of this school was similar to that already expressed concerning others. It is supported by the pupils, aided by six hundred dollars granted by the Assembly.

“In connection with this subject, there is one fact of much interest. However strong and exclusive was the prejudice of colour a few years since in the schools of Jamaica, we could not, during our stay in that island, learn of more than two or three places of education, and those private ones, from which coloured children were excluded; and among the numerous schools of Kingston there is not one of this kind.”

The extraordinary change in Wolmer's Free School between the years 1814 and 1837, may be viewed as a fair illustration of the general change which, in these twenty-three eventful years, took place in the condition of the white and coloured classes in Jamaica. In 1814, when not a single child of colour had been admitted into Wolmer's School, the coloured class were politically a cypher; since then their advance has been astonishing, almost incredible.

The following extract will show how much difference there is between the condition of the coloured class in Jamaica and in the United States. Pages 283 and 5.

“We had repeated invitations to breakfast and dine with coloured gentlemen, which we accepted as often as our engage-

ments would permit. On such occasions, we generally met a company of gentlemen and ladies of superior social and intellectual accomplishments. We must say that it is a great self-denial to refrain from a description of some of the animated, and we must add splendid, parties of coloured people which we attended. * * * * * We were introduced to a large number of coloured merchants, dealers in dry goods, crockery, and glassware, ironmongers, booksellers, druggists, grocers, and general importers, and were conducted by them through their stores; many of which were on an extensive scale, and managed apparently with much order and regularity. One of the largest commercial houses in Kingston has a coloured man as a partner, the other two being white. Of a large auction and commission firm, the most active and leading partner is a coloured man. Besides these, there is hardly a respectable house among the white merchants, in which some important office, oftentimes the head clerk, is not filled by a person of colour. They are as much respected in business transactions, and their mercantile talents, their acquaintance with the generalities and details of commerce, and sagacity and judgment in making bargains, are as highly esteemed by the white merchants, as though they wore an European hue. The commercial room is open to them, where they resort unrestrainedly to ascertain the news, and a visitor may not unfrequently see sitting together at a table of newspapers, or conversing together in a parlance of trade, persons as dissimilar in complexion as white and black can make them. In the streets the same intercourse is seen. The general trade of the island is gradually and quietly passing into the hands of the coloured people.*

“ We had the pleasure of being present one day at the sitting of the police court of Kingston. Mr. Jordon, editor of the Watchman, in his turn as a member of the common council, was presiding justice, with an alderman of the city, a black

* It might have been mentioned here, that at least three-fourths of the houses in the city of Kingston (containing from 40 to 50,000 inhabitants) belong to the coloured class, and that the most widely circulated newspaper in the island is published by two gentlemen of that class.

man, as his associate. At a table below them sat the superintendent of police, a white man, and two white attorneys with their huge law-books and green bags before them. The bar was surrounded by a motley assemblage of black, coloured, and white faces, intermingled without any regard to hue in the order of superiority and precedence. There was about a dozen cases judged while we were present. The court was conducted with order and dignity, and the justices were treated with great respect and deference, both by black and white.

“After the adjournment of the court, we had some conversation with the presiding justice. He informed us that whites were not unfrequently brought before him for trial, and in spite of his colour, sometimes even our own countrymen. He mentioned several instances of the latter, in some of which American prejudice assumed very amusing and ludicrous forms. In one case, he was obliged to threaten the party, a captain from one of our southern ports, with imprisonment for contempt, before he could induce him to behave himself with proper decorum. The captain, unaccustomed to obey injunctions from men of such a complexion, curled his lip in scorn, and showed a spirit of defiance; but on the approach of two police officers, whom the court had ordered to arrest him, he submitted himself. We were gratified with the spirit of good humour and pleasantry with which Mr. J. described the astonishment and gaping curiosity which Americans manifest on seeing coloured men in offices of authority, particularly on the judicial bench, and their evident embarrassment and uneasiness whenever obliged to transact business with them as magistrates.

“During one of our excursions into the country, we witnessed another instance of the amicability with which the different colours associated in the civil affairs of the island. It was a meeting of one of the parish vestries, a kind of local legislature, which possesses considerable power over its own territory. There were fifteen members present, and nearly as many different shades of complexion. There was the planter of aristocratic blood, and at his side was a deep mulatto, born in the same parish, a slave. There was the quadroon and the unmitigated hue and unmodified features of the negro. They sat to-

gether round a circular table, and conversed as freely as though they had been all of one colour. There was no restraint, no uneasiness, as though the parties felt themselves out of place, no assumption or disrespect, but all the proceedings manifested the most perfect harmony, confidence and good feeling.

“ At the same time there was a meeting of the parish committee on roads, at which there was the same intermixture of colour, the same freedom and kindness of demeanour, and the same unanimity of action. Thus it is with all the political and civil bodies in the island, from the House of Assembly to the committees of jails and houses of correction. Into all of them the coloured people are gradually making their way, and participating in public debates and public measures, and dividing with the whites legislative and judicial power; and in many cases they exhibit a superiority, and in all cases a respectability of talents and attainments, and a courtesy and general propriety of conduct, which gain for them the respect of the intelligent and candid among their white associates.”

Such being the condition of the coloured class in Jamaica, it is for those in the United States themselves to decide upon the advantages or otherwise of emigration. All that the legislature of that island contemplates or desires, is to place the question fairly before them, and afford to a limited number the means of making a trial. If these succeed, the presumption is, that others will follow: if they fail, the distance is not such as to make it difficult for them to return, and there the matter will end; for no people will continue to leave their own country and go to another, unless to be benefited by the change.

The eyes of the whole civilized world are turned upon the British Colonies, to watch the ultimate result of the great change now in progress there; and if by the removal of free labourers into them, these will themselves be benefited and emancipation made at the same time successful, surely this is the policy which humanity as well as interest dictates. Upon this policy the legislature of Jamaica have acted. In the midst of difficulties, they have voted the sum of \$250,000 per annum for three years, to assist in introducing an additional population, for which there is abundance of room, without pre-

justice to those who are already there. By the enactment in question, they have not only granted this large sum of money, but they have carefully provided for the good treatment and comfort of the emigrants while at sea. They have also provided, as agent-general of emigrants, a gentleman of high character, to receive the people on landing—to aid them, if required, in procuring eligible situations, and to provide for their wants to any reasonable extent, until employment can be procured. The act further provides to exempt emigrants from the annoyance of militia duty. As a member of the House of Assembly myself, I can testify that the act was drawn up with the most anxious desire to make it acceptable to every class of emigrants, whether from America or Europe; and that if in any respect it should in practice be found defective, the necessary remedy will be readily applied.

For further particulars on this subject, reference may be made to the respectable houses of Messrs. Aymar & Co., New-York, Messrs. Bevan & Humphreys, Philadelphia, and Messrs. Howell & Sons, Baltimore, who are authorized to treat with emigrants, and to provide them with a free passage, in accordance with the provision of the act.

I have only further to add, that in the foregoing pages, I have represented the prospects to emigrants as favourable, because I conscientiously believe them to be so. But let me not be misunderstood; idle, improvident, and intemperate habits will lead to destitution in Jamaica as well as elsewhere, and persons of this class need not expect to be benefited by a removal; but the man of sober, frugal and industrious habits, most assuredly may, in that favoured island, with comparative ease, make himself comfortable and independent; and if he possesses the requisite talents, he will there find no bar to his own advancement in society, or that of his family; the road to preferment and honour is alike open to every class of men without distinction.

ALEX'R BARCLAY,
Commissioner of Emigration for Jamaica.

New-York, July 24th, 1840.



