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*The Abolition of Slavery
in the French Colonies.*

By

Alexis de Tocqueville.



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From Dr. J. A. Green

Feb 24 1839

REPORT

MADE TO

THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES

ON

THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

IN THE

FRENCH COLONIES,

BY

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE;

JULY 23, 1839.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.

BOSTON:

JAMES MUNROE AND COMPANY.

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*Recd. Dr. D. A. Gree
Jan. 20. 94*

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INTRODUCTION.

THE Commission, in whose behalf this Report was presented to the French Chamber last year, was composed of MM. Baron Roger, De Tocqueville, Count de Sade, Wustenberg de Rémusat, Cadeau-d'Acy, Dugabé, Odilon Barrot, Viscount de Panat.

The French Executive is more and more impressed with the importance of the subject, as may be seen by the following report of the Minister of the Marine and the colonies, presented to Louis Philippe in May last, and which has been approved by his Majesty.

“SIRE ;

“Each day so augments the number and importance of the questions relative to slavery, as well as to the political constitution of the colonies, and these questions raise difficulties so serious, that I feel the necessity of submitting them to the examination of a consulting Commission, chosen from the members of the primary State bodies. I have the honor to beg your Majesty's approval of the following nomination.

The Duke de Broglie, <i>President</i> ,	} Peers of France,
The Count de Saint-Cricq,	
The Marquis d'Audiffret,	
The Count de Sade,	

Wustenberg,	} Members of the Chamber of Deput- ties.
De Tracy,	
Passy, (<i>Hyppolite</i>),	
De Tocqueville,	
Baron Lepelletier-d'Aulnay,	
Bignon,	

Baron de Mackau, *Vice-Admiral*.

The Count de Moges, *Rear-Admiral*.

Filleau de Saint-Hilaire, *Counsellor of State and Di-
rector of the Colonies*.

In order to put the reader of M. De Tocqueville's Report in possession of as complete an idea of the French Colonies as one page can present, the following statistics are subjoined. The table is compiled principally from M'Culloch, whose authority is Montvéran, *Essai de Statistique sur les Colonies, Pièces Justificatives*, Nos. 5 and 6.

POPULATION.

Colonies.	Census of	Whites.	Free Col.	Slaves.	Total.
Martinique,	1832	9,410	18,832	80,753	107,995
Guadaloupe,	1831	10,596	10,772	90,743	112,111
Marie-Galante, &c.	1823	2,570	279	11,600	14,440
French Guiana,	1832	1,291	2,220	19,173	22,684
Isle de Bourbon,	1830	20,000	11,500	60,000	97,500
Senegal, &c.	1825	240	3,573	12,297	16,110
Fr. Factories in India,	1825	1,021	107,986	1,194	110,501

45,128

281,760

Statement (in Killogrammes) of the products of the French Colonies imported into France in 1831. The Killogramme is equal to 22 lbs. Avoirdupois.

Sugars of all Qual.	Coffee.	Cacao.	Cotton.	Cloves &c.	Asatio.	Indigo.	Gum.	Wax.	Wood of all kinds.
Killogr.	Killogr.	Killogr.	Killogr.	Killogr.	Killogr.	Killogr.	Killogr.	Killogr.	Killogr.
87,915,770	2,199,646	168,343	968,505	236,967	82,122	13,036	677,040	12,898	1,384,889

209,209,000

REPORT.

THEY, who have hitherto considered the subject of slavery, have, for the most part, endeavored to show its injustice or to mitigate its hardships.

The Commission, in the name of which I have the honor to speak, perceived, from the commencement of its labors, that its task was at once more simple and more grand.

It has been sometimes assumed that Negro Slavery had its foundation and justification in nature herself. It has been declared that the slave-trade was a benefit to its unfortunate victims; and that the slave was happier in the tranquillity of bondage, than in the midst of the agitation and the struggles that accompany independence. Thank God, the Commission has no such false and odious doctrines to refute. Europe has long since discarded them. They cannot serve the cause of the colonies, and can only injure those planters who still uphold them.

The Commission has not now to establish the position, that slavery can and ought to cease. This truth is now universally acknowledged, and one which slaveholders themselves do not deny.

The question before us has ceased to be a theoretical one. It is at length comprehended in the field of

practical politics. We are not to consider whether slavery is evil, and ought to terminate, but when and how it can best be brought to an end.

Those, who, while they admit that slavery cannot always continue, desire to defer the period of emancipation, say that before breaking the chains of the negroes we must prepare them for independence. The black now escapes almost entirely from the salutary bonds of marriage; he is dissolute, idle, and improvident; in more than one respect he resembles a depraved child rather than a man. The truths of Christianity are almost unknown to him, and of the morals of the Gospel he knows only the name.

Enlighten his religion, reform his habits, establish for him the family relation, extend and fortify his intellect, until his mind can conceive the idea of the future, and acquire the power of forethought. After you have accomplished all these things, you can without fear set him free.

True; but if all these preparations cannot be made in a state of slavery, to exact that they shall have been made before servitude can cease, — is it not in other words to declare that it never shall cease? To insist on giving to a slave the thoughts, the habits, and morals of a free man, is to condemn him to remain always a slave. Because we have made him unworthy of liberty, can we forever refuse to him and his descendants the right of being free?

It is true, that the conjugal union is almost unknown among the slaves of our colonies.¹ It is true, that

¹ See the statistics of marriage in the documents printed by order of the Minister of the Marine.

our colonial institutions have not favored, as much as they should have done, the marriage of the blacks. It must, however, be allowed, that, in this respect, the masters have sometimes attempted to do what the law has not done. But the negroes have generally escaped, and still escape, this salutary influence.

There exists, indeed, a profound and natural antipathy between the institution of marriage and that of slavery. A man does not marry when he cannot exercise marital authority, when his children must be born his equals, irrevocably destined to the wretchedness of their father; when, having no power over their fate, he can neither know the duties, the privileges, the hopes, nor the cares which belong to the paternal relation. It is easy to perceive that every motive, which incites the freeman to a lawful union, is lost to the slave *by the simple fact of his slavery*. The several means which the legislature or the master may use to attract him to that condition, which they have rendered him incapable of desiring, will always be without effect.

The same remark may be applied to the other arguments.

How can the reason of a man be enlightened and strengthened, while we hold him in a state where reason is useless to him, and where its exercise may be injurious? We cannot seriously hope it. Besides, it is absurd to endeavor to render a laborer active and diligent, who is compelled to work without wages; and it is a puerile effort to undertake to endow with discretion and habits of foresight those, whose lot it is to remain strangers to their own fate, and who see their future destiny in the hands of another.

Even religion itself can seldom be made to operate on the slave, and at best its influence is extremely superficial.

All, who have had occasion to reside in our colonies, agree in saying, that the negroes are much disposed to receive and retain religious faith. "The negroes are eager for religion," says the Governor General of Martinique, in one of his last reports.

It seems certain, however, that the negroes have as yet conceived only very obscure and unsettled ideas on the subject of religion. This may be attributed in part to the small number of priests who live in the colonies, to the little zeal of some among them, and to the habitual indifference of the masters on this point. But these are, it must be allowed, only secondary causes; the primary cause is still slavery itself.

This is easily understood, and is explained by what precedes.

In many countries where the Europeans have introduced servitude, the masters have always opposed, openly or in secret, the preaching of the Gospel to the negroes.

Christianity is a religion of free men; and they fear, lest in exciting it in the soul of the slave, they may also awaken there some of the instincts of liberty.

When, on the contrary, they have had occasion to call on the priest for his assistance in preserving order, and introduce him among the laborers, he has had little power, because in the eyes of the slave the priest appeared but as the substitute for the master, and the sanctifier of slavery. In the first case the slaves could not, in the second they would not, receive instruction.

Moreover, how can we succeed in elevating and purifying the mind of one, who feels no responsibility for his own conduct? How convey the idea of moral dignity to a man, who is nothing in his own eyes? With every exertion, it is hardly possible to enlighten and spiritualize the religion of a slave, whose life is spent in hard and incessant labor, and who is naturally and irrevocably plunged in ignorance by the very tenor of his condition. It is not easy to purify the life of a man, who can never know the principal charms of the conjugal union, who can see in marriage only another slavery in the bosom of bondage. If the subject be carefully examined, we shall be convinced, that in most slave countries, the negro is entirely indifferent to the truths of religion, or at least that he turns Christianity into an exciting and gross superstition.

It would seem then hardly reasonable to believe, that in slavery we can destroy those vices to which slavery naturally and necessarily gives birth. The thing is without example in the world. It is only experience of liberty, liberty long possessed, and directed by a power, at once energetic and restrained, which can prompt and form in man the opinions, virtues, and habits, which become a citizen of a free country. The period, which follows the abolition of slavery, has therefore always been a time of uneasiness and social difficulty. This is an inevitable evil; we must resolve to meet it, or make slavery eternal.

Your Commission thought that all the means, which might be employed to prepare the negroes for emancipation, would be very slow in operation, and of extremely limited utility. They have, therefore, judged, that little is gained by delay, and have questioned

whether it is not attended with danger. Slavery is one of those institutions, which may endure a thousand years, if no one undertakes to enquire why it exists at all, but which it is almost impossible to maintain when that enquiry has once been made.

If we consider what is passing in France, it seems evident, that at the point to which opinion has now arrived, after the Chambers have been often occupied with the question of emancipation, and have *made it the order of the day*, as the able reporter of the preceding Commission has expressed it; it seems evident, we say, that the administration cannot long resist the pressure of public sentiment upon this subject, and that, after a very short delay, it will be compelled, directly or indirectly, to abolish slavery. On the other hand, if we consider the state of the colonies, we are induced to believe, that, for their interest alone, servitude must soon cease among them.

One cannot study with attention the numerous documents placed before the Commission, without discovering that in the colonies the idea of the abolition of slavery is present to every mind. The approach of this great social change, the natural fears and well grounded hopes which it inspires, disturb and deeply agitate society.

The events, which are happening in the English colonies, surrounding our own, the occurrences of each year in the mother country, and what is passing even in our own islands, where, within eight years, thirty-four thousand blacks¹ have been enfranchised; all these announce to the planters that slavery must soon terminate.

¹ See Statistical Papers, published by the Minister of Marine.

“Emancipation,” says the privy council of Guadeloupe, (26th December, 1838,) “is now inevitable, not only on account of the efforts of the abolitionists, but as a consequence of the topographical position of our islands, and their vicinity to the English colonies.”¹

The Governor of Guadeloupe, in his report of the 25th December, 1838, says, speaking of the extra session of the colonial council, “a kind of panic was excited on this occasion, throughout the country; a report was current that the slaves were disposed to reclaim their liberty forcibly, if it were not granted by the first of January. Nothing has happened to countenance the uneasiness which was manifest. It is certain, however, that the laborers are agitated by the hope of approaching emancipation.”

It is easy to conceive, that such a situation is full of perils, and that it already gives rise to a part of the evils, which the destruction of slavery may occasion, without producing any of the benefits, which may be expected from liberty. It is no longer a state of regular and established order; it is a transitory and stormy condition; the dreaded revolution is already begun. The planter, who sees this inevitable revolution advancing upon him day by day, is without definite prospects, and consequently heedless of the future. He begins no new enterprises, because he is uncertain whether he shall reap the fruit of them. He improves nothing, because he is sure of nothing. He takes no pains to preserve that which may not always belong to

¹ Martinique and Guadeloupe are separated only by a narrow arm of the sea from Saint Lucia, Dominica, Montserrat, and Antigua. All these islands are visible from each other. Saint Lucia and Dominica having been French, their example is still more contagious for our islands.

him. The uncertainty of their approaching destiny weighs heavily upon the colonies; it contracts their intelligence and abates their courage.

It is partly to this cause, that we must attribute the pecuniary distress in our colonies. The estates and slaves are without purchasers, because there is no security for the proprietors and masters. The same results were also visible in most of the English colonies during the period, which immediately preceded the abolition of slavery. Of this we shall be convinced on reading the discussions of the English Parliament in the session of 1838.

If this state of things be long continued, it will ruin the white population, and leave little hope of ever attaining peaceably and happily the enfranchisement of the blacks.

In the gradual and involuntary relaxing of the bond of slavery, the negro becomes gradually accustomed to the idea of being feared; he readily attributes all that humanity accomplishes in his favor to the terror which he inspires. He becomes a bad slave, without acquiring any of the virtues of the free man; he loses that habitual obedience and respect, of which the magistrate must avail himself when the authority of the master is withdrawn.

“The negroes of the Antilles,” say those reports which are most recent and most worthy of credit, “quit their huts almost every night to wander abroad and abandon themselves to dissipation. It is also during this nocturnal liberty, that they employ themselves in robbery and smuggling, and hold their meetings. When day arrives, they are exhausted and little fit for work. When the planters are asked why they give

this liberty, so fatal to their slaves, they reply that they are unable to prevent it. In short, when the master demands of his negroes anything that they are unaccustomed to do, they resist, at first by idleness, and, without further action on his part, proceed to poison the cattle. The terror of poison is great in this country; by its power the slave governs his master."

This terror of poison seems to prevail the most extensively in Martinique. The Commission have examined a report by the Governor of Martinique, dated the 15th March, 1839, in which this functionary attributes partly to the fear of poison the little interest the planters take in raising cattle. "The raising of cattle," he says, "is discouraged by poison."

Humanity and Morality have often claimed, and sometimes perhaps with imprudence, the abolition of slavery. It is now a measure of political necessity.

It is better that the crisis should be brought about by a firm and prudent hand, than to leave the colonies to be enfeebled and degraded by delay, and at length to become incapable of supporting it.

Your Commission have been unanimous in the opinion, that the time has come to engage actively in the final abolition of slavery in our colonies; and they have thought it their duty to endeavor to devise the best method of accomplishing that object.

Two general systems have naturally presented themselves.

The first gives liberty to the slaves individually, and by a succession of slow and progressive measures.

The second puts a stop to servitude at once, and for every slave.

Your Commission, after mature investigation, were

of the unanimous opinion, that simultaneous emancipation presented less inconvenience and fewer perils than gradual emancipation.

This opinion, which, moreover, seems universally admitted in the colonies themselves, may at first appear surprising. But an attentive examination will soon show, that it is founded upon reasons which seem unanswerable. These reasons have already strongly attracted the attention of the late Commission. "*The system of simultaneous emancipation,*" said the reporter, "*appeared preferable.*"

All gradual emancipation has, indeed, three weighty inconveniences :

First. When the government shall at once, and by the direct and visible operation of her will alone, grant independence to all the slaves, she may easily, in return for the new rights which she confers, impose upon each of them certain peculiar and strict obligations, and place them at once under temporary regulations, which shall gradually accustom them to make a good use of their liberty.

As the change is complete, the whole society being transformed at the same time, it will not be impossible to introduce new maxims of government, a new police, new functionaries, new laws. These laws applying to all, no one will feel himself injured, none will resist them. The mother country is prepared to make such an effort, and the colonies to submit to it.

When, on the contrary, the slaves receive their liberty one by one, and by a concurrence of circumstances which appear accidental, the social change thus effected attracts no attention. At each separate enfranchisement the nature of colonial society is funda-

mentally changed, while its exterior form presents no alteration. The enfranchised continuing to form a class by themselves, we must create for it special legislation, separate magistrates, a distinct government. These are undertakings always difficult and often dangerous. It seems more simple and less troublesome to resort to common law.

Now the common law for a society of slaves does not at all resemble ours; it were a great error to suppose it.

All who have travelled in those countries where slavery exists may have remarked, that the social power interferes less in the affairs of life, and assumes infinitely less responsibility, than in countries where slavery is unknown. Public authority is not needed to repress vagabonds and idlers, since the laborer is always retained in a certain place and kept at work. Society does not provide for the wants of children, old men, and the sick; these charges are attached to slave property. Most police laws are unnecessary; the discipline of the master takes their place. In slave countries the master is chief magistrate; and when the state has established, maintained, and regulated the usages of servitude, the largest part of the task is accomplished.

The legislation of a slave country does not take into account the existence of a great number of men at once free, poor, and depraved. It makes no preparations to provide for their wants, to repress their disorders, and correct their vices.

It is, then, easy for the enfranchised to abuse his independence, and lead an idle and vagabond life. At first this evil is hardly perceptible, but it increases with the

*This is the reason why I do not see them given to all the
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number of the enfranchised, until at length we unexpectedly find ourselves in the midst of an entire population, ignorant, miserable, and disorganized; among whom we find only the vices of free men, and whose morals or conduct it is then out of our power to regulate.

Secondly. The system of gradual emancipation, which increases the difficulty of compelling the enfranchised to labor, has moreover this effect, that it takes from him the will to labor. All who have travelled in slave countries have perceived, that the idea of labor is inseparably connected with the idea of bondage. Labor is not only avoided as a painful effort, but as a dishonor. And experience teaches, that, where there is slave labor, free men remain idle.

So long as gradual emancipation lasts, (and its operation must be slow, if it accomplishes the design of those who prefer it to simultaneous emancipation,) a part of the population is still bound to forced labor; labor becomes the stamp of slavery; and each negro, on receiving liberty, is naturally led to consider idleness as at once the sweetest and the most glorious privilege of his new state. The necessary result of gradual emancipation is, then, to entail on those upon whom it acts vagrancy and wretchedness, as well as liberty.

This explains sufficiently what is passing in our colonies.

We see by the despatches of the governors, that among the thirty four thousand slaves, who have been enfranchised since 1830, but a very small number of them have applied themselves to labor. None have been inclined to agricultural labor, a labor peculiarly degrading in their eyes, because it has only been under-

X. But, as an answer to the objection, that the despatch in the present case, is not a sufficient proof of the principle, that any negro, who is once enfranchised, will not be inclined to labor, it is to be observed, that the despatch in the present case, is not a sufficient proof of the principle, that any negro, who is once enfranchised, will not be inclined to labor.

taken and is now exclusively performed by slaves. "Who does not know," says the privy council of Guadaloupe, "that with regard to labor the past has compromised the future? Who does not know the repugnance of free labor for the continuation of slave labor? Who cannot perceive that the simultaneous employment of these two kinds of labor is a contradiction, and an obstacle to the end we should keep in view, that of reinstating by means of liberty the culture of the earth, now degraded by slavery?"

Thirdly. All gradual emancipation has, moreover, the inevitable effect of leading by a very short path to complete emancipation.

A very recent and very striking example of this fact has just happened in the English colonies. One part of the negroes were about to attain their liberty two years before the rest. As soon as the period arrived for the first, it was found necessary to advance it to the second, and all took possession of their independence together.

It may be fearlessly affirmed, that it will be always thus in every country where this method is pursued.

When, by means of gradual emancipation, a great number of negroes have received their liberty, it becomes almost impossible to hold the others in a state of servitude. How shall we compel the free black to labor by the side of the slave? How preserve the obedience of the slave in the presence and in the midst of free blacks? How maintain the rule of servitude, when the exception of liberty becomes common, and the hard law of slavery, destroyed in principle for all, only exists temporarily and partially for a few?

Hence it happens that a multitude of slaves are

emancipated at once. But it happens in spite of us, without our knowledge, without our control, without preparation; it happens when authority is enfeebled, and when a part of the population has already acquired those habits of idleness and disorder, which render government difficult, and moral education almost impossible.

To these primary and general difficulties we must add a crowd of special and secondary ones, which are discovered on an attentive examination of the different systems of gradual emancipation, which have hitherto been proposed or put in practice.

In 1831 a royal ordinance broke down almost every barrier to the right of enfranchisement. Since that time, from motives of interest or caprice, many thousand blacks have been enfranchised every year. Most of these enfranchised slaves were either aged and without value, or young and strong persons whom a disgraceful preference thrust upon free society, without assured means of honestly supplying their wants. The result of this ordinance was, therefore, to set at liberty the most immoral and least available portion of the black population. So that the most respectable part, and the best adapted to labor, remains in a state of servitude.

The honorable M. de Tracy has pointed out another method. He proposes to give the slave the absolute right of purchasing his liberty, at a fixed price named by the state.

This system naturally produces effects directly opposite to those we have just commented upon. The strongest, youngest, most laborious, and most indus-

trious of the slaves, will procure their liberty; the women, children, and the aged, the unruly and idle will be left on the hands of the master. The moral effect is to a certain extent better, but it also presents great perils.

It is to be feared that, reduced to feeble and imbecile agents, the business of labor will be soon deranged; forced labor will become unproductive before free labor is reinstated and organized.

It is true that the principle of redemption has long existed in the Spanish colonies, and that it does not appear to have produced there such unhappy results.

But it is of public notoriety in the New World, that, among the Spaniards, slavery has always been peculiarly softened. We may, moreover, convince ourselves of this by examining the decrees of the Spanish kings at a period, when in every European nation the black code was so strongly marked with barbarism. The Spaniards, who showed themselves so cruel to the Indians, have always treated the negroes with singular humanity. In their colonies the situation of the black has approached that of the white more nearly than in any of the others, and the authority of the master has often resembled that of the father of a family. The slave, more kindly treated, sighed less for a freedom, which must be preceded by great efforts. The legislature granted a privilege, which he seldom desired to use.

These laws were moreover introduced among the Spaniards at a time when slavery, established by law and custom, was the common lot, and seemed to be the natural destiny of the black race. The negroes looked upon liberty only as a rare and singular state.

There was no powerful inducement for seizing it. Now they are excited to it by every motive; now that slavery is marked by universal reprobation, and appears only as an abuse of power; now that it is strongly opposed by general usage and faintly defended by law; now that it has become a transitory exception; now that liberty is so general and so near, imagination already kindles at her approach.

Another method of gradual emancipation was also proposed by the honorable M. de Tracy.

Without destroying slavery in the present generation, it declares all those children free who may hereafter be born.

This method does not produce those disastrous consequences, which have first been pointed out, but it presents other difficulties and other dangers.

Since marriage is almost unknown among the slaves, there is scarcely any natural and necessary connexion, save between mother and child. This last family bond, so important to be preserved, is broken, if, while the child is treated like a free man, the mother remains in bondage; if, by a monstrous subversion, the one is placed lower in the social scale than the other; a state which outrages nature, and from which no real good can ever result.

Here, also, the general objections, already brought forward against gradual emancipation, present themselves in full force. In the midst of a preceding generation held in servitude, how can you obtain the labor of the young enfranchised generation? How will you compel the parents to labor as slaves in the midst of their free children?

Your Commission being thus convinced, that universal emancipation was the least dangerous mode of destroying slavery, have applied themselves wholly to the enquiry as to the general conditions and the manner in which this emancipation should be effected.

Your Commission have repelled at once the idea of assimilating slave property to other kinds of property protected by law. They do not admit that the restoring of a negro to liberty is a parallel case to that of a forced exaction of property by the State for the public good. Man has never had the right of possessing man, and the possession itself has always been and still is unlawful.

And even if the principles concerning the use of property for the good of the community were here applicable, it is evident that the planter could not, in accordance with these principles, claim in advance the reimbursement of the total value of the slave, for in the place of the slave whom the law takes from him, it offers him a free laborer. The free workman, it is true, will only serve for wages; but the slave himself can only serve on condition of purchase, nourishment, protection, and clothing, which are wages under another form. The property of the planter, then, is not invaded by the fact of emancipation; he has strictly no right to an indemnity, unless, by the yet doubtful result of this emancipation, the negroes refuse to work, or the wages which they demand for their labor shall exceed the sum for which their coöperation could be compelled during slavery.

It is, nevertheless, the unanimous opinion of your Commission, that it would be neither humane, equitable, nor wise to refuse assistance to the colonies at the

hour when a general emancipation is declared, and during its operation.

It was with the authority, the aid, and concurrence of the government, that the planters undertook to cultivate the earth with the assistance of slaves. In 1679, a decree of council granted a premium of thirteen livres a head for each negro imported into the colonies. Letters patent of 1696 and 1704 confirm this privilege to slave dealers. All legislation relative to the colonies, during the eighteenth century, is full of similar encouragements, and, only five years before the revolution, the 23th of October, 1784, a decree of council runs thus, "The privileges allowed to the privateers, engaged in the slave trade, having become insufficient, and these privateers not following the business with the activity which the interest of the colony requires, His Majesty, ever inclined to give protection to the colonies, and to the privateers of his kingdom, has graciously granted new encouragements to the trade." A long enumeration of privileges follows.

France has, therefore, by every means in her power encouraged the slave trade for more than a century, and it is only nine years since she ceased to tolerate it. More enlightened and more just, she now wishes to substitute free for forced labor. Science indicates, and many experiments already made, even in the tropical regions, seem to prove, that culture may be easier, more productive, and less burdensome with the labor of enfranchised negroes, than with that of slaves. We may then conclude, that the revolution effected in our islands will be as happy for the planters as for the negroes; and that when it is accomplished, it will cost the proprietor of the soil less to cultivate his fields with

5. a small number of laborers, paid according to their work, than it costs him now, when he is obliged to purchase, and to support throughout the year a multitude of slaves, a large portion of whom are always unproductive.

On the other hand, it must be acknowledged, that the event of so great a social change will always be attended with uncertainty. Even though the final result of the great experiment should be satisfactory, as there are so many just reasons for believing it will be, the passage from one state to another is never unattended with danger; it is accompanied with inevitable inconvenience; it leads to changes in customs and modes of living always difficult and often burdensome. It is possible, it is even probable, that, for a time, until the negro has been trained by new legislation to habits of labor, the cultivation of estates in the colonies will be less productive by free, than it has been by forced labor; in other words, that wages will be annually more expensive than the purchase and support of slaves are at the present time.

To leave the planters to meet this risk alone would be flagrant iniquity. It is unworthy of the grandeur and the generosity of France, to cause the principles of justice, humanity, and reason, so long unrecognised by her and by her children across the sea, at last to triumph at the cost of these latter alone, taking to herself the honor of so tardy a reparation, and leaving nothing but the expense to her colonists. A great injustice has been committed by both, and both should contribute to repair it.

The Commission likewise considered, that, if this mode of conduct were not indicated by equity, it would be dictated by interest.

To achieve the happy results of emancipation without difficulty, it is necessary to obtain and preserve the active concurrence of the planters. We shall not succeed in that object by abandoning them, and withdrawing from them our assistance during the crisis we may cause.

There is one truth, which must not be forgotten; the richer the proprietors of the soil, the more easily will emancipation be accomplished, the more peaceable and the shorter the transition from one state to another. Everything will be difficult if emancipation is effected while they are embarrassed, and perilous if it begins in their ruin. It is only a prosperous colony, which can easily support the passage from servitude to liberty.

Now it appears certain, that in our colonies, especially in the Antilles, the pecuniary situation of the proprietors has long been embarrassed.

From information, which the Commission have reason to believe worthy of confidence, it appears that the mortgages contracted and not discharged, for the last ten years in Guadaloupe and Martinique, amount to one hundred and thirty millions of francs, that is, nearly one fourth of the capital represented by all the agricultural estates of these two islands.* The interest of the money is about sixteen per cent.

Before depriving the planter of the labor of his slaves, it is prudent to enable him to purchase free labor.

Your Commission have thought that these considerations would be sufficient to determine the Chamber to provide for the necessary expenditure.

* The whole value of the lands in Martinique is estimated at 330,385,450 francs, the value of the lands in Guadaloupe at 268,371,925. See Historical Documents published by the Minister of Marine.

France does not wish to destroy slavery, only to have the grief of beholding the ruined white man leave the soil of the colonies, and the blacks relapse into barbarism. She intends not only to bestow liberty on the enslaved, but to constitute civilized, industrious, and peaceable societies. She will not refuse to her government the means of attaining this end.

France will not forget, that this is a question of liberty, happiness, life to three hundred thousand of our fellow creatures, who speak our language, obey our laws, and are even now turning their eyes towards us as their liberators and fathers. If France believes that this is the time to regenerate and save those distant societies, which she has created, and whose fortunes she has put at hazard by introducing slavery into their bosom, she will not consider that it becomes the rank she holds in the world, to compromise by her economy the success of an enterprise so glorious and so sacred.

The Commission have moreover judged, that the emancipation could be so conducted, and managed with such prudence, that the treasury would only be required to make an advance, and that the nation might, by the product of enfranchised labor, be saved a portion of the expense entailed by emancipation. This will be farther explained. It was therefore the unanimous opinion of the Commission, that the planters should receive an indemnity, the amount of which they cannot yet decide, but the larger part of which should be paid before emancipation shall be accomplished.

The Commission, however, do not regard indemnity as the only condition necessary to the success of the enterprise. There are many others which remain to be mentioned.

It is important, first, to direct attention to the kind of danger that is to be feared.

Many persons, preoccupied by the recollections of St. Domingo, are led to believe that the emancipation of the slaves will occasion between the two races, who inhabit our colonies, bloody collisions, whence the expulsion or the massacre of the whites may soon follow. Everything leads to the belief that these fears are entirely imaginary, or at least much exaggerated. The Commission have examined with the greatest care all the documents relative to the enfranchisement of the slaves in the English colonies, and they feel bound to declare, that nothing, which has taken place in those colonies, leaves room to suppose that emancipation would be accompanied with the disasters which are dreaded.

England possessed nineteen slave colonies; these colonies contained in all about nine hundred thousand blacks or mulattoes, and only about two hundred and thirty thousand whites. One of these colonies, Jamaica, counted for herself alone three hundred and twenty-two thousand slaves, and thirty-five thousand whites; another, Demerara, is situated on the continent, and surrounded by uninhabited countries, where the negroes could easily assemble, beyond the reach of the whites. Emancipation caused and still occasions inconvenience in the English colonies, but it has nowhere given rise to great disorders or attempts at insurrection. Yet England maintains few troops in her colonies, and emancipation there has been accompanied by circumstances, which might have caused disorder and violence.

France has only four colonies.¹ Three of these are islands of small extent, and the fourth is almost uninhabited.² Upon these islands the entire population is placed under the constant control of government; it cannot escape from its action for a single day. The impossibility of resistance destroys the desire on the part of the negroes. Slavery, moreover, long softened in the French colonies, cannot call down the vengeance of the blacks on their former masters.

It is not the violent destruction of our colonies, which is to be feared from emancipation, it is their gradual decay, and the ruin of their industry by the cessation, the considerable diminution, or the high price of labor. We have not to dread the massacre of the whites by the blacks; but it is to be apprehended, that they will refuse to work with them and for them, or that they may be contented with a few transient exertions, which, under a tropical sky, may supply the first wants of man.

This seems the only danger we have to fear; but it is of serious importance, and must be removed at all events; for France labors to create civilized societies, and not hordes of savages. The government, therefore, after having acted on the planter by means of indemnity, should act on the slave in his turn, by a wise and prudent legislation, which shall first introduce, and

¹ Omitting Senegal, which is only a settlement.

² The greatest length of Martinique is 16 leagues, and its breadth 7. The two islands of Guadeloupe, taken together, are from 22 to 23 leagues long, and about 5 to 7 broad. Bourbon is 14 leagues long by 9 to 10 broad. The surface of Guiana is estimated at 18,000 square leagues, but this colony as yet has only 5,000 free inhabitants and 16,000 slaves. See statistics published by the Minister of Marine.

then, if necessary, compel the laborious and manly habits of liberty.

The Chamber will doubtless expect, that, having proceeded thus far, in order to illustrate this question practically, we should here consider in what manner emancipation has been effected in the English colonies.

In 1823, the House of Commons resolved that in ten years slavery should be abolished.

There is nothing to indicate that from this time, until the liberty of the blacks was proclaimed, the colonies had made any effort to prepare themselves for the change, which was announced to them. Most of them resisted, even obstinately, the attempts made by the mother country to induce them to take preparatory measures. In many of them, especially in Jamaica, great embarrassment had long prevailed in most of the private fortunes.

Under these circumstances, in 1833, the bill of emancipation passed.

It is well known that the English colonies are not all subjected to the same mode of government.

The most ancient, like Jamaica, are almost independent states; they have political assemblies, which assume the exclusive right of making laws, and claim to hold their rights, not from the English Parliament, but from the king of England alone. The most recent, such as Guiana, have, properly speaking, no representative body, and the royal power governs them almost without control.

It is necessary to bear these facts in mind in order to understand perfectly what is to follow.

The bill declares, that, from the 1st of August, 1834,

slavery should be abolished in all the English colonies;¹ and that the slave should then pass forever from the control of his master, to be thenceforward subject to the law alone.

The legislature, however, did not immediately grant to him all the rights of a free man.

Slaves more than six years old on the 1st of August, 1834, were compelled to remain, during a certain number of years, attached to their former masters and to serve them as apprentices.

The term of apprenticeship was fixed to extend to the 1st of August, 1838, for slaves attached to the person, and for the much larger number, who cultivated the fields, to the 1st of August, 1840.²

The agricultural, or *predial* apprentice, as it is expressed in the bill, was bound to serve without wages, for the benefit of a master whom he was not at liberty to leave. But the master could no longer compel that labor by his own arbitrary will. Between these two men interposed, for the first time, a magistrate, charged to watch that neither of the two transgressed the laws which had been imposed upon them.

The master owed nourishment, lodging, and maintenance to the enfranchised as in the time of slavery.

The enfranchised owed to the master forty-five hours of work a week, or five days at nine hours a

¹ Except at the Isle of France, where it was to endure six months longer; and at the Cape of Good Hope, where the period of abolition was delayed four months.

² The reason of this difference is as follows. The legislature has only imposed certain hours of labor on the agricultural negro, while it necessarily leaves the domestic negro constantly at the disposal of his master. It appears then just, that the apprenticeship of the second should terminate earlier than that of the first.

day. The remainder of the time was his own. It was the design of the legislature, that the slave should employ, in the service of his master, and for wages, the greater part of the time which was left in each week at his disposal.

The master was deprived of the power, which he had hitherto exercised, of inflicting arbitrary punishments. The magistrate alone could punish. But the magistrate was authorized to inflict corporal chastisement, from which women only were exempt.

In the English colonies, and particularly in the old colonies, almost the whole of the public functionaries were chosen from among the planters. The police was entirely in the hands of the justices of peace, that is, of the proprietors. These magistrates, according to the custom of the mother country, were not paid.

To regulate the new and various obligations imposed by the bill on the master and the laborer, Parliament judged it proper to introduce a magistracy in the colonies, which should receive a compensation.

The bill which abolished slavery, created a certain number of magistrates of this description.¹ These magistrates who were principally taken from the mother country, had an exclusive, but circumscribed and temporary jurisdiction.

They could judge only in cases between the apprentices and the masters, and their power was to expire with the term of apprenticeship, on the 1st of August, 1840.

¹ Sixty were placed in the single colony of Jamaica, which contained 322,000 slaves; nearly in the proportion of one magistrate for every 5,000 enfranchised. At Guiana there were 15 for 86,000 slaves, or about one magistrate for every 5,500 blacks.

Thus far Parliament confined itself to declaring its general will. Secondary rules, and the details of the methods of executing them, were referred to the local legislatures, in those colonies which had representative assemblies, and in other cases to the metropolitan government.

Thus it was the executive power of the mother country, or the legislative power of the colonies, which was to promulgate all the regulations relative to vagrancy, to the police, to discipline, as well as to the details of the respective obligations of the masters and laborers.

To the measures, which have been mentioned, Parliament added another, which was intended to facilitate their success. It granted to the planters an indemnification, which was fixed at the sum of twenty millions of pounds sterling, or five hundred millions of francs, for the nineteen colonies.

The first object of this indemnification was to repair the losses which it was supposed that emancipation would occasion to the proprietors of slaves.

The second was to ensure the concurrence of the colonial powers.

With this intention the bill declared, that the indemnification should only be paid as each colony should submit to the will of the government, and take in concert with her, the measures which the government should judge necessary for the effective action of the bill.

This clause had the anticipated result. All the colonies, even those which had been most clamorous at the first movements towards emancipation, finally submitted; and each legislature, after more or less hesitation,

made the laws and took the measures indicated by the government as necessarily consequent on emancipation.

Parliament had declared that apprenticeship should not continue longer than till August 1st, 1840; but the colonies were at liberty to choose an earlier term, or to reject it altogether.

All the English colonies eagerly embraced the system of apprenticeship, excepting one alone, Antigua, which, profiting by the permission granted by the bill, declared on the contrary that, from the 1st of August, 1834, the slaves should be admitted, without transition, to all the civil rights of free men. Hereafter we shall speak of the result of this solitary attempt on the part of Antigua. At present our attention is called to the colonies where the apprenticeship was established.

In all the colonies, and even in England, it was feared that great disturbance, and possibly great disasters, might immediately follow the proclamation of liberty. These fears were fallacious. On the 1st of August, 1834, seven hundred thousand blacks emerged together from slavery, and without any great commotion. There was not a drop of blood shed, nor one estate destroyed, throughout the vast extent of the English colonies. Never has so remarkable an event been accomplished with such extraordinary tranquillity and ease.

The same spectacle is continued to this day; and if the numerous documents, which have been examined by the Commission, may be relied on, it may be said that the number of crimes and offences has not increased in the English colonies since the abolition of slavery. "There is not in His Majesty's dominions,"

says the Governor of Guiana, "a more tranquil or better regulated province than this colony, and yet there are but two or three whites on each estate. We have, in all, but thirty policemen, who, if necessary, seek assistance among the enfranchised blacks, and these often act as constables without remuneration. These constables are unarmed. The policemen have swords; but I intend to take them away soon, that the last trace of forced obedience may disappear."¹

This was written in 1835, and under date of the 1st of September, 1836, we find in another despatch of the same governor: "For three months the swords of the policemen have been exchanged for staves." In Guiana there are now thirty-one thousand enfranchised blacks, scattered throughout an immense territory.

Experience moreover has proved, that the difficulty does not consist in restraining the enfranchised from revolt, nor in punishing or preventing crimes, but in training them to laborious habits. In all the colonies the beginning of apprenticeship was attended with difficulty. The negroes, without refusing to labor, worked ill and carelessly. Without being rebellious, they were undisciplined.

At first the magistrates were compelled to use numerous and severe punishments, which became less and less rigorous and frequent, as the blacks became accustomed to the new system of labor.

In the first year of the apprenticeship, from the 1st of August, 1834, to the 31st of July, 1835, the magistrates inflicted seven thousand seven hundred and eighty-six punishments on enfranchised slaves in Bar-

¹ Parliamentary Papers, published in 1836, p. 26.

badoes. One thousand seven hundred and forty-two of these were corporal chastisements. There were nearly thirty thousand enfranchised blacks in Barbadoes.

This coercion will seem less rigorous, if compared with a fact stated by the Governor of Guiana, in a despatch, dated June 20th, 1835, relative to what took place in the time of slavery.¹ "On the estate of V . . .," said he, "of three hundred and fifteen slaves, one hundred and forty-eight were whipped in six months, and on the estate of P . . ., of one hundred and twenty-nine slaves, seventy-four were also whipped in the same space of time. So two hundred and twenty-two out of four hundred and forty-four received corporal punishment within six months. At that rate during the year none escaped." The governor adds with reason, "If the slaves merited these terrible punishments, they must have been wretched creatures; and if they did not merit them, we must acknowledge the extreme cruelty and oppression of the system under which they were administered." It is remarkable that these same slaves, enfranchised and treated with kindness, distinguished themselves by their good conduct.

Besides, as I have already said, the number of punishments, corporal punishments especially, diminishes rapidly during apprenticeship. The number of corporal chastisements, which in Guiana amounted in 1835 to five hundred and thirty-nine, in 1837 were but eighty-three.

It may be believed, that in many of the colonies, perhaps in most of them, apprenticeship will encounter

¹ Parliamentary Papers, published in 1837, p. 475.

greater obstacles in the disposition of the masters than in that of the former slaves. It can hardly be doubted, on reading the documents which have been laid before the Commission, and particularly the regulations, researches, memoirs, and periodicals or newspapers of the planters themselves, that, discontented with the change imposed by the mother country, they had first attempted to govern enfranchised negroes as they had done while they were slaves, and then sought to revenge themselves for the resistance, which this mode of conduct had occasioned. This may be perceived particularly in the colonies, whose institutions render them most independent of the government. Few colonial laws have been enacted¹ at Jamaica since the act

¹ It would, moreover, be very unjust to judge all the English slave colonies by Jamaica. Not only is Jamaica a very large and very populous island, since it is about 64 leagues long by 25 broad, with 427,000 inhabitants, 392,000 of whom are negroes, but the population there assumes a peculiar character, which is nowhere else found in the same degree.

Almost all the proprietors of Jamaica are absentees. The management of their affairs is entrusted to agents, who only remain on the estates long enough to enrich themselves. The same agent is generally charged with the management of several estates. Some are mentioned in the Parliamentary Documents, who have as many as 10,000 negroes under their orders. The administration of these agents was in general very severe. They could not superintend the conduct of their inferiors, and they took no interest in the black population confided to their charge. It appears certain, that in almost every place where the proprietors were resident, the transition from slavery to apprenticeship was easy; which seems clearly to indicate that the greatest obstacles proceed from the whites, and not from the blacks. This same idea, moreover, is often found in the correspondence of the English governors, and chiefly in that of the governors of Guiana and Jamaica. We find especially the following expression in a despatch of the governor of Guiana, dated the 18th of November, 1835; "Upon every estate where the apprentices are complained of, it has been invariably found, upon examination, that the overseers or agents had either killed the negroes' hogs, or ruined their gardens; that the hours of labor

of emancipation, which do not seem to aim at destroying some protection or advantage secured to the negroes by the act.

When the execution of a measure indicated by the act devolved on the colonies, it was often done with a severity entirely opposed to the spirit of the law, and very prejudicial to the real interests of the colonies themselves.

It was the salaried magistrates, who condemned the enfranchised to confinement, but the colonial authorities alone had charge of the prisoners. They seem to have exercised over them great cruelty, and treatment entirely opposed to the spirit of the act of emancipation.

Parliament had allowed the enfranchised blacks to free themselves from their obligations by paying a certain sum; but the right of determining the forms of arbitration and designating the umpires was left to the colonial authorities. These umpires always affixed to liberty so high a price, that it was impossible to attain it. Instances of this were very numerous throughout the legislative documents laid before the Commission.

The act had fixed the amount of compulsory labor at forty-five hours a week, and the minimum of each day's labor at nine hours. The actual intention of the legislature was, that the blacks should labor nine hours during the five first days of the week, which left the sixth entirely at their own disposal. In many of the

had been so divided by them, that the negroes could not gain by the change. Everywhere some imprudent acts of the same nature had been committed, and had resulted in destroying the confidence of the apprentices in the whites, and in creating discontent and anger. See Parliamentary Documents, published in 1836, p. 99.

colonies the whites, in spite of the prayers of the negroes and the counsel of the governors, persevered in forbidding their apprentices to labor more than seven hours a day, which deprived them of every advantage they might hope from the free labor of Saturday.

In most of the colonies, and particularly in Jamaica, discord and jealousy soon arose between the former masters and the enfranchised blacks. There was a concealed, but constant struggle between them. In all the colonies a double effect was perceptible. The blacks soon showed great confidence in the metropolitan government and the salaried magistrates. On the other hand, these magistrates were exposed to the dislike and animadversion of the planters. It often happened, that the colonial courts imposed fines upon them, which were paid from the metropolitan treasury.¹

In spite of these unfortunate circumstances, it must be acknowledged that apprenticeship has not produced the great evil, which the planters expected, that is, the cessation of labor.

In the English documents we see, that in the beginning of apprenticeship most of the planters insisted, that it would be necessary to abandon the cultivation of sugar.

It is certain that, during the apprenticeship, the production of sugar did not sensibly diminish in the English colonies. In many of them it was much increased.

At Guiana, the produce of 1836 exceeded in value that of 1835 by about twelve millions. The governor

¹ See Lord Glenelg's Speech pronounced in 1838, and the Bill of April 18th of the same year, the object of which was to provide a remedy for this abuse.

announced, on the 17th of September, 1836, that "since the abolition of slavery, the value of property had prodigiously increased in the colony."¹

We find also in the same documents relative to this colony, that in the course of 1836 and 1837, the number of marriages quarterly was about three hundred, and the number of adults or children frequenting schools had increased to nine or ten thousand.

These facts are the more remarkable, because at Guiana more than one fourth of the enfranchised blacks were born in Africa, and were acquired by means of the slave trade.

Most satisfactory results were also obtained in the island of Antigua, where absolute liberty had been granted by the masters themselves in 1834. The transition from slave to free labor was accomplished in this colony with astonishing facility. Good will never having ceased to reign between the whites and the blacks, the latter remained voluntarily with their former masters, and did not seek to obtain exorbitant wages.

Mr. Halley, commander of the government-brig *Bison*, having been sent, in December, 1838, to examine the state of Antigua, made the following report.

"Daily wages are moderate, and nearly correspond with the former cost of supporting the slave. The situation of the proprietors is satisfactory; they are unanimous about the good effects, which result from emancipation, and which they congratulate themselves on having hastened. From that time plantations and estates are in demand; they may be said to have doubled in value, since they can be sold at a higher price than when slaves were attached to them."

¹ Parliamentary Documents, published in 1836, pp. 135, 475.

These are admirable results ; but it would be dangerous, it must be allowed, to expect them elsewhere ; for the situation of Antigua is very peculiar.

The island of Antigua contained, at the time of emancipation, but 29,370 slaves, 4,066 free blacks, and 2,000 whites ; in all 35,436 inhabitants. This population, small as it is, covers the whole surface of the country. Almost all the estates in Antigua were occupied ; all were private property. Population there was almost as crowded as in Europe. The negro was therefore compelled to labor or to starve. At Antigua, moreover, (and this cause is still more efficient than the other in the eyes of the man who can feel and reason,) slavery has always assumed a form of peculiar mildness, and the masters themselves have made great efforts to improve the character of the negroes and to conciliate their affection. It may be remembered, that they alone, in 1834, chose that their slaves should pass from bondage to perfect freedom, thus sacrificing the gratuitous labor which the Emancipation Bill permitted them to exact for six years. This fact is sufficient to explain all that preceded and followed it. Men, who are capable of such conduct in the midst of their slaves, prove that they have been masters full of gentleness and compassion ; and it may easily be conceived that they have not met with rebellious freed men.

Things were in this state in the English colonies in the beginning of the year 1838.

At this time public opinion in England was again agitated ; numerous popular meetings took place ; various propositions were made to Parliament with the view of softening the fate of the apprentices, and delivering them from the violence which some of the

planters, especially in Jamaica, were accused of using towards them. This gave birth to the bill of the 18th of April, 1833, the object of which was to grant new securities to the enfranchised. But they went yet further.

The apprenticeship was to end for the artisan or domestic negroes on the 1st of August, 1833; for others the act had fixed the term two years later.

A law was proposed in Parliament and was about to be passed, giving liberty to all the negroes on the 1st of August, 1833.

The efforts of the ministry stopped the passage of the law; but the moral effect was produced, and it became impossible to prolong apprenticeship. The English government felt bound to state this new necessity to the colonial authorities, and to invite their submission.

These events aroused the black population of the colonies, and produced in most of the planters great surprise and deep irritation.

Many transactions had taken place in the English colonies, on the supposition that apprenticeship would continue until 1840, and its premature dissolution injured large interests.

On the other hand, the colonies perceived that, in the face of the manifestations of opinion in the mother country, it would be very dangerous to refuse to a part of the blacks the liberty, which the others received. This would have been very difficult, even with the support of public opinion in the mother country; it was impossible to attempt it after what had just passed in England.

All the colonies therefore consented, but with a bad grace and with regret, to abolish the apprenticeship in their territories after the 1st of August. Many were late in determining on this step. At Trinidad it was only on the 25th of July, 1838, that the planters could resolve on the measure.

Complete liberty was then proclaimed in all the English colonies on the 1st of August of the same year. It is almost useless to remark, that it was under the most unfavorable circumstances that can be imagined.

It burst upon them amid the irritation and the embarrassment of the masters. The negroes became entirely free at the very moment when their complaints against the whites had just been brought out, and sometimes exaggerated, in the political assemblies of the mother country. There was no preparation for this new liberty. In many of the colonies the instructions of the English government did not arrive until many months after the apprenticeship had been abolished.¹ The colonial authorities, left to their own discretion, hastily arranged the first necessary measures.

Nearly a year has elapsed since this great and formidable experiment was made. The result of ten months only is already known. This time is too short to form a decided opinion. Already, however, some important truths are established.

It is certain that absolute liberty, like apprenticeship, has been received in all the English colonies with joy,

¹ Liberty was granted on the 1st of August, and it was not until September that the orders of council, intended to regulate the state of the poor, to organize the police, to repress vagrancy, to fix the relations between laborer and master, were transmitted to the colonies dependent on the crown. Parliamentary Papers, published in 1839, p. 4.

but without disorder. It is equally certain that the freed negroes have nowhere manifested that taste for a wandering and savage life, which seems to have been expected. They have, on the contrary, appeared much attached to the places in which they had lived, and to the habits of civilization which they had already contracted. "It is a remarkable fact," says Captain Halley, in a report already quoted, dated the 3d of December, 1838, "that at Jamaica, (the most exposed of all the colonies,) emancipation took effect without disorder and without disturbing the tranquillity of the island. The negroes have exhibited no inclination to fly from civilization, or withdraw to the interior or to the forests. In general they have remained on the estates where they already lived."

As to the nature and duration of their labor, the Commission has examined such contradictory documents, assertions so opposite to each other, that they could form no opinion with entire certainty.¹ Let us take, however, a general view of the present state of the English colonies.

In those colonies, where the population is large in proportion to the territory, as at Barbadoes, Antigua, and St. Christopher, the negroes, having no other resource but labor, work well and for moderate wages.

In colonies, which do not possess this advantage, where the country is very fertile, and easily cultivated, as at Guiana and Trinidad, the negroes have demanded exorbitant wages, and often for interrupted labor ;

¹ We find, it is true, by the official reports, that in 1838 the culture of sugar was more abundant than in 1836 or 1837. In 1836 it amounted to 4,090,095 cwt., in 1837, to 3,344,863, and in 1838, to 4,124,162. But it is difficult to draw a conclusion from these figures, the cane gathered in 1838 having been planted and cultivated during the apprenticeship.

yet the proprietors are able to continue the cultivation of the soil with profit.

But in Jamaica, where the culture of the cane is naturally expensive, on account of the exhaustion of the land, or of the difficulty of transporting the produce to market, where the negroes can easily live without working for the whites; in Jamaica, and in islands placed in analogous circumstances, the blacks work less, and much less constantly, since the cessation of slavery than before that period, and the prospects of the sugar trade are doubtful.

This unfortunate situation seems to arise from various causes, which might have been avoided. It must be attributed in the first place to the unhappy relations, which, during the apprenticeship, were established in most of the colonies, between the masters and the enfranchised blacks. The jealousy and hatred, which then arose, now render the equitable regulation of wages extremely difficult. It is evident that, while the planter almost always endeavored to reduce the wages of the negro below the real value of his labor, the negro was exorbitant in his demands. As not only opposite interests but secret enmity existed between these two men, it is almost impossible that a good understanding should ever be established between them.

The reluctance shown by the blacks to constant labor, in the service of the great proprietors of the soil, may likewise be explained by the circumstance of their being themselves small proprietors.

Almost all the earlier enfranchised of the English colonies have retained the gratuitous enjoyment of the cabin, which they inhabited during slavery, and the

garden which they were then allowed to use. Each of them possesses such a field; it occupies a part of his time, and is sufficient for almost all his wants. The negro prefers to labor for himself, in its cultivation, rather than work on the lands of another. This may be the more easily understood, as there is something analogous to it in those countries of Europe where the land is much divided. The small proprietor, occupied upon his own estate, is with difficulty persuaded to grant his services to his neighbor, the rich farmer. It is thus that, in most of our provinces, the number of laborers daily decreases, and their assistance becomes more precarious.

If it be thought necessary to the cultivation of colonial produce, and to the continuation of the white race in the Antilles, that the services of the enfranchised negro may be permanently hired by the great proprietors of the soil, it is evident that we should not create for him a domain, where he can easily live by laboring for himself alone.

The Commission would fail in their duty, if, after having explained to the Chamber, somewhat in detail, the manner in which the English Government has conducted emancipation, and what has thus far been the result of the enterprise, they did not endeavor to draw from these facts light by which to guide ourselves.

It has been seen that the parliament of Great Britain chose to pour into the hands of the planters the whole amount of the indemnification, when once the colonies had acquiesced in the principle of emancipation, and before emancipation was accomplished.

This last provision of the law has been much criti-

cised in England. It has been said, that "it would have been wiser and more prudent to retain for a time in the hands of the State a portion of this capital; and that in distributing it beforehand to the colonists the government deprived itself, from the beginning, of a powerful means of holding them in dependence on her, and insuring their concurrence."

These criticisms seem reasonable, when it is considered that, from the period when the indemnification was paid, a silent but incessant struggle arose between the colonial legislatures and the government, a struggle which has not yet ceased.

The Emancipation Bill had subjected to apprenticeship only those children, who were more than six years old. All under that age were immediately considered free.

It does not appear that any measure was taken to secure to these latter suitable means of education. This must be considered as a great error. Children should either have been left in the same situation with their parents, or the State should have charged itself with their superintendence and instruction. In leaving them to themselves, and thus abandoning them to chance, great embarrassment has been created for the present, and possibly great danger prepared for the future.

The measure of apprenticeship was also severely criticised in England. Eminent statesmen condemned as well the principle as the measure.¹ They have said, that no compulsory labor whatever could prepare a man for free labor, and that liberty only can teach us to be free. Others, while they admit the necessity of

¹ See among others the speech of Lord Howick, 3d of March, 1830.

an apprenticeship, condemn the system which was adopted.

Your Commission incline to the latter opinion.

They consider that a time of trial, during which the negroes, already possessing many of the privileges of free men, are still compelled to labor, is indispensable to accustom the planters to the effects of emancipation, and to allow them to introduce in their customs, and their methods of culture, the various changes which emancipation may produce.

They consider this intermediate state as not less necessary to advance the education of the black population, and to prepare them for liberty.

So long as absolute slavery exists, the master does not suffer the public authority to intervene between him and his slave. His will is law, and the slave knows no other. This is the very essence of slavery. It may be imagined that, so long as slavery is not abolished, government will find a thousand difficulties in acting upon the black and preparing him for liberty. The same obstacles do not exist when the negro, no longer belonging to the white man, is only bound to labor for a time on his account.

On the other hand, when the last traces of servitude are at length effaced, and the negro is raised to the rank of a free man; when he has already tasted absolute independence, and believes that he has nothing more to expect from the magistrate, and little to fear, social power loses its control over his will, his opinions, and his habits.

But while the promised liberty is not yet complete; while the respect and obedience nurtured in slavery are still maintained by forced labor; while, at the same

time, the soul of the slave is elevated by the approach of independence, the action of power is easy and efficient. The planter no longer rejects the hand of government, and the negro yields to its influence without difficulty and without regret. He does not yet see in the magistrate a master, but a guide and a liberator. It is the most favorable moment to found that empire over the minds and the habits of the black population, and acquire that salutary influence, which will be necessary to direct them when they shall be entirely free.

Your Commission has therefore decided unanimously, that it is necessary to place an intermediate and transitory state between slavery and liberty, and diligently considered what that state ought to be.

It seems that, in establishing apprenticeship, the attention of the English was turned to the continuation of labor alone; an immense interest, undoubtedly, but not the only one. The Emancipation Bill contains no general and efficient measure to promote the education of the young apprentices, and the moral improvement of the adults. There is no attempt to cherish emulation among them, nor to lead them gradually through successive stages to the enjoyment of complete independence.

Apprenticeship was to remain to the last such as it was first established. At the end of six years, as during the first year, the apprentice could have the free use of his labor, and the privilege of receiving wages, but one day in the week at most.

In the English system of apprenticeship, the property of the planter in the black man is not in fact wholly destroyed; the State has only regulated and limited the use of it. The negro is still compelled to labor with-

out wages for the interest of the man, who holds him in slavery. The aspect of bondage is changed rather than destroyed.

Your Commission believe that apprenticeship may be conceived in a different spirit, and carried out in a different manner, from what has been attempted by the English.

They have organized a plan; the time to discuss it has not come, but its principal features should be explained to the Chamber.

On the abolition of slavery, an essential change should take place in the relations between the whites and the blacks. The bond which now exists between them should be entirely destroyed.

The State should become the only guardian of the enfranchised population; it should grant, on its own conditions, the services of the blacks to the planters, retaining in its own hands all exercise of discipline.

Labor should no longer be gratuitous.

There are about two hundred and fifty thousand slaves in the colonies. Two thirds, or about one hundred and sixty-six thousand, are from fourteen to sixty years old, capable therefore of habitual and productive effort.

The documents which have been received, and the information which has been collected, induce the belief, that even demanding moderate wages for the work of these one hundred and sixty-six thousand laborers, the State can both cover the interest of the indemnification, and create a sinking fund to pay off the whole amount, and at the same time allow to the laborer daily a portion of his wages.

He should have, moreover, throughout his apprenticeship, the use of Saturday and the possession of a piece of land sufficient for his support. With these facilities he can maintain himself.

As to the children, they will continue to be supported by the proprietor under a contract of apprenticeship, which shall ensure to him their services until the age of twenty-one.

He shall also have charge of the aged slaves and of sick laborers. There will be regulations to establish uniform habits in this respect.¹

These measures, which should satisfy the demands of humanity, would be favorable to the planters themselves; and it is believed they would gain in labor, in security, and prospects, much more than they would lose in money.

The Commission are not called on to discuss the details of this plan, nor to propose its adoption to the Chamber; but it is their duty to state that the principles on which it is founded have been unanimously approved.

In the English system, the slave was made by law the apprentice of his former master. The master lost a part of his power; he retained the rest. His was not a borrowed power; he continued to exercise it in virtue of his former right. The government interfered

¹ The same obligation was imposed on the masters by the local regulations of Antigua. "The local government of Antigua," says Captain Halley, in his report of the 13th of December, 1838, "has adopted wise measures, dictated by a highly commendable humanity, relative to the aged and all the infirm who cannot maintain themselves. They have decreed that all such individuals shall remain at the charge of their former owners."

only to regulate the use and prevent the abuse of this right.

A part of the embarrassment attending apprenticeships has proceeded from this source.

The Commission have decided, that it would be infinitely more conformable to the interest of the negroes, as well as of the planters, to destroy at once every relation which has existed between the master and his slave, and to transfer to the State the guardianship of all the enfranchised population. This method of proceeding has many considerable advantages.

Inevitable inconveniences accompany the change from slavery to liberty. If possible, they must not even seem to be imposed on the enfranchised negro by his former master. In such cases it is wise to have the whole responsibility, with the power, in the hands of the government.

The State becoming thus the protector of the enfranchised slaves, it is left free to take the best and the most speedy method of preparing them for the complete possession of independence. It can impose those conditions, which it may judge indispensable, and compel their submission to the requisite trial before they are left wholly to their own responsibility. It is free to direct, according to circumstances, those measures which may diffuse instruction among them, regulate their habits, and efficiently promote marriage. These measures, emanating from the State, and not from the former masters, will not cause those sentiments of distrust and hatred, the fatal effects of which we have seen in the British colonies. Imposed on the white as the conditions on which he is to receive the laborer's services, and on the black as the price of independence, they will be easily admitted and strictly executed.

The Commission have also approved the idea of wages.

Wages are a just indemnification for the sacrifices of the State. They are useful to the black; for independently of the comfort which he derives from them, they make him feel the advantages of labor, and establish its respectability in his eyes. The absence of wages is the stamp of slavery.

Wages, in fine, have the advantage of depriving the planters of all pretext for the unjust suspicions, which they have sometimes entertained of the metropolitan government.

By means of wages the pecuniary interest of the State is evidently bound to the support of a productive labor in the colonies, and wages consequently form, in the eyes of these colonies, the strongest guarantee for the exertions of the government to encourage labor.

The Commission are therefore convinced that a system of apprenticeship, founded upon the basis which has been suggested, would conciliate at once the claims of the Treasury and the interests of the planters. In this system, moreover, they find the happiest combination, which could be adopted in favor of the blacks, that race oppressed and degraded by slavery, which it is the duty and the honor of France to civilize, enlighten, and improve, as well as to enfranchise.

Upon all the great points, which have been presented for the consideration of the Chamber, the decisions of the Commission were unanimous; they were divided only on the form of expressing their opinions.

Many of the members have thought that the Commission, after having rejected the plan proposed by the honorable M. de Tracy, should confine themselves to a

declaration of their own opinions, as to a substitute, but without seeking to engage the government and chambers in any other plan.

The majority did not coincide in this opinion. They considered that the discussion and examination, in which the committee had been engaged, had led to the discovery or furnished the proof of many important truths, which it is important to invest at once with the forms of law.

The necessity of simultaneous emancipation, the necessity of indemnification, of apprenticeship, and of the regulation of labor, appeared to the Commission so well demonstrated, that they did not hesitate to make these measures the basis of future law.

The majority were, moreover, profoundly impressed with the perils incident to the present state of things, and with the danger of deferring a change of measures to another period.

In this situation they would be faithless to their duty, if they did not recommend to the Chamber to fix not only the term of slavery, but the time when that term shall be definitively declared. They considered the session of 1841 as the most natural and fitting time. They propose to you therefore to declare that, in the session of 1841, the project of a law shall be brought forward to fix the period for the abolition of slavery.

It is necessary to inform the Chamber that this proposition has not been made with the unanimous approbation of the members of the Commission.

One member has objected, that he neither recognised in the Commission nor in the Chamber the right to impose on the government an obligation to present the project of a law; that such a procedure would in-

vert the natural order of the constitutional powers, and aim a blow at their independence.

These reasons, however powerful they may appear, were not considered sufficient by the majority of your Commission.

The majority observed, first, that the proposition in question was not new ; that its features might be found in many former laws enacted since the commencement of the present representative government of France ; that the laws of Finance especially offer frequent examples.

They considered, moreover, that those gentlemen of the ministry, who attended the sittings of the Commission, themselves appeared to desire that the period, when the approaching law of emancipation shall be presented, with the principal points it should contain, might now be determined ; that thus every shadow of interference with the executive power vanished ; and that, on the contrary, the proposition of the Commission assumes the form of a resolution taken in concert by the government and the chambers.

The majority of the Commission decided that it would be precipitate and dangerous to announce, at this time, the precise moment, when slavery shall cease in our colonies ; but they believe that it will be prudent to fix a time when that period shall be named, and also to point out, in general terms, in what manner it shall be accomplished. It is thought that thus the necessary tranquillity of mind may be secured, and the excitement of fear and of exaggerated hope allayed ; and that the government may be furnished with competent force safely to effect a revolution, which it is now neither desirable nor possible to prevent.

Consequently the Commission have authorized me to submit to you the following resolutions.

First. In the session of 1841 a law shall be proposed to fix the time for the general and simultaneous abolition of slavery in the French colonies.

Secondly. This law shall determine the indemnification to be paid in consequence of this measure, and shall secure the reimbursement of it to the State, by means of a deduction from the wages of the newly enfranchised blacks.

Thirdly. The same law shall establish the basis of a regulation for ensuring labor, for the education and moral culture of the enfranchised, and preparing them for the habits of free labor.



