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West India Emancipation Vindicated.

Speech of Rev. Henry Bleby, Missionary from Barbados, at the Anniversary of West India Emancipation, at Abington.

The following is an address delivered at Abington, Mass., July 31, 1858, by Rev. Henry Bleby, Wesleyan Missionary, on the occasion of the celebration of emancipation in the West Indies, in 1834. It is an overwhelming vindication of the rightfulness and policy of that great measure, and points out with clearness and candor, all the leading agencies which preceded and followed the abolition of slavery in those islands. Read it and loan it; and rejoice that God is vindicating the right. Let pro-slavery croakers hang their heads in shame, and be converted.

I am, perhaps, Mr. Chairman, the only person present who was an eye-witness of that event which you have met together this day to celebrate. You will see that I am a very old man, sir; the snows of age have not entirely covered my head; but I am old enough to have been present during that insurrection to which you have referred, and which was one of the principal events which hastened on the crisis of the movement for West India Emancipation, and constrained the British government to "let the oppressed go free."

It had been customary with the pro-slavery press of Great Britain,—and a very large portion of that press was, up to a late hour, under the influence of the West India body, and of those interested in the maintenance of slavery,—it had been customary for that press, as it is now of the pro-slavery press of this country, to endeavor to mislead the masses by asserting that the slaves were better off than they would be in freedom, that they were perfectly content with their lot, that they begged their chains, and that it was in brief, a condition very little short of the happiness of Paradise. You may imagine, then, what sort of feeling would be excited in Great Britain, among its churches and the people generally, when the startling intelligence reached them, in the beginning of 1833, that fifty thousand slaves in the island of Jamaica made an effort for liberty, had resolved to strike a blow for freedom, and had stood up in opposition to their masters, and to the law which held them in bondage, and claimed their freedom. Sir, the illusion was at once dispelled, and it was seen and felt, throughout the length and breadth of Great Britain, that the public mind had been imposed upon, and that there existed in the West Indies, among the slaves, an intense desire, nay, more than that, a determination to be free.

Sir, I happened to be stationed in the island of Jamaica, and in that part of it which was the scene of this insurrection. I knew the person with whom the insurrection originated very well; I marked its progress; I was an eye witness to the cruelties and slaughter by which it was suppressed; and I saw it brought to a termination. The man with whom the insurrection originated—Samuel Sharp,—was a slave, and a member of the Baptist church in Montego Bay. Although it may seem strange to many, Sam Sharp was a very handsome negro, a perfect model man; and, more than that, he had learned to read. He was born in slavery, but he had never felt anything of the bitterness of slavery. He was born in a family that treated him indulgently; he was a pet, and was brought up as the playmate of the juvenile members of the family, and had opportunities of learning to read and for mental cultivation, to which very few of his fellow-slaves had access; and Sharp, above all this, was possessed of a mind worthy of any man, and of oratorical powers of no common order. I have been astonished, when I have heard that man address a large assembly, as I did several times while he was in jail, to see the power with which he swayed the feelings, the hearts and the minds of his auditory. He was a man of no common stamp, though a black man and born in slavery.

Well, sir, Sharp determined to free himself and his fellow-slaves. I do not know whether he was himself deceived, or whether he knowingly deceived his fellow-conspirators, but he persuaded a large number of them to believe that the British government had made them free, and that their owners were keeping them in slavery in opposition to the wishes of the authorities in England. It so happened, sir, that just at that time, the planters themselves were pursuing a course which favored Sharp's proceedings directly.—They were holding meetings through the length and breadth of the island, protesting against the interference of the home government with their property, passing very inflammatory resolutions, and threatening that they would transfer their allegi-

ance to the United States, in order that they might perpetuate their interest in their slaves. Sharp dexterously took advantage of these meetings, and pointed out to the slaves, that if it were not true that the British government were willing to make them free, there would be no necessity for such meetings and such publications as these. The consequences were, that about fifty thousand of these people, at the Christmas holidays, were in insurrection, and claimed their rights as British subjects, and as free men, refusing to go to work on any terms, except on the payment of their proper wages as free workmen.

The insurrection was soon put down, as you may imagine. Sharp really believed that the British soldiers would not act in opposition to the slaves, in claiming their freedom; he soon found his mistake, however. A large body of military was ordered to that part of the island. The commander-in-chief was a man who felt as a man ought to feel under such circumstances, and sought to do everything he could to put an end to the insurrection by lenient measures, and issued a proclamation, promising that all who would return to their duty within a limited period should be pardoned,—that no notice should be taken of what they had done, unless they had been guilty of incendiarism, or had committed personal violence upon the opposite party. Parties were sent out with the proclamation and many of the slave, finding that their attempt to recover their freedom in this way would be vain, came in, and resumed their labors upon the estates.

The insurrection would soon have been put down, and very little loss of life would have ensued, had not the militia of the island, consisting of the planters, who had manifested the greatest cowardice when the insurrection broke out, now recovered their bravery, and subjected those who had taken part in it to every indignity and outrage. I have seen men and women who came in under the proclamation, and the promise it contained from the commander-in-chief, taken out of the field, with their hoers in their hands, tied, and shot dead. I used to see the gallows filled with insurgents from morning to night. I remember, on one occasion, my attention was directed to an execution which was about to take place—that of the principal leaders in the insurrection. A court-martial was sitting in Montego Bay, and about twenty or thirty yards off, a gallows had been erected, on which five or six persons could be executed at once. Five men were hanging on it, and five more were beneath it, and it was rumored that Capt. Dehany, a man who had taken a leading part in the insurrection, was to be executed in the next lot. The executioner, who was a brutal black man, and one who had escaped the gallows on condition that he should perform these horrible duties, was leaning against one of the posts of the gallows, eating his breakfast,—a piece of salt fish in one hand, and a piece of plantain in the other. He was told his victims were ready. (They only allowed the doomed ones half an hour after their conviction to prepare for death.) Bacchus,—that was the name of the executioner,—put down his food upon a projection of the gallows, walked up the ladder, and with the knife with which he had been eating his breakfast, severed the cords on which the victims on the gallows were hanging, and down they fell, one after another, upon the heap of dead below.

Then he brought out Dehany and his fellows. I knew him at once, though I had never seen him before, by the demeanor of the man,—a fine, broad-chested, model man,—a yellow-skinned negro, as they called him there; but there rested upon his countenance an angry frown. The man walked out to meet his doom as if he were walking at the head of a triumphal procession. A gentleman stepped up to him and said, "Dehany, what is troubling you at a time like this?" "Mr. Manderson," said he, "they want me to go before God with a lie in my mouth. They want me to say that the missionaries put us up to it. They know it is a lie." "Well never mind, said the gentleman; "don't let that trouble you now." The frown soon passed off his face, and they were marched up the platform and tied up; signal was given, and the rope was cut. I looked, and only four of them hung upon the gallows, and Dehany was not among them. The rope had broken, and he had fallen to the ground. They picked him up, half strangled, and in a state of unconsciousness for a moment or two. I went up, in the midst of the crowd, to witness his demeanor. Still, sir, with all these horrors about him, the man was undaunted. I could hear the whisper of prayer upon his lips; there was nothing about him of bravado, but every thing that indicated the manly courage of one who is conscious he is dying in an honorable cause.

So it was with Samuel Sharp. After the insurrections was put down, Sharp was taken, and he was the last man put to death in consequence of that insurrection. About two thousand were slain; many of whom, of course, in encounters with the military, but most of them were either shot or hanged in cold blood. I have myself seen not less than nineteen of these poor creatures led out in one batch, to be hanged up like dogs. I have known sixty to be led out from the same jail, in the course of three days, and

put to death. On one occasion, I saw a poor fellow brought into town; his hands tied behind him; a court martial was immediately summoned, and with scarcely a show of evidence that the man had done anything in connection with the insurrection,—indeed, there was nothing found, except that he was in the midst of a crowd looking on whilst a building was burning, which had been set on fire by the insurrectionists,—he was convicted, and led out to be shot. They were in such a hurry, that they did not even take the trouble to pass sentence upon him; and when within an hour and a half from the time he was brought into the town, he stood under the gallows. I heard him inquire, "What are you going to do with me?" They had not even had the humanity to tell him he was going to die. The officer stepped up to him, took up his jacket, which had been torn off when he was brought to the spot, threw it over his face, and said, "You will find out in a moment." He stepped back, the word was given, and the man lay there, a bullet through his brain, and another through his heart. I heard one man say to the crowd of slaves standing round,—pointing to the hole in the slave's head,—"You want your freedom, do you? Put your finger there!—That is the kind of freedom we will give you, you black devil!" This I heard with my own ears.

I saw hundreds thus slaughtered in cold blood. Sharp was the last brought out to be put to death; and his end was worthy of his character. I had frequent opportunities to converse with him while he was in jail. When I saw so many put to death, I wrote a communication for one of the island newspapers, with the intention of directing the Governor's attention to the wholesale slaughter that was going on. It had the effect I intended. The Governor read it, and the next post brought down an order to the authorities, civil and military, that no further executions should take place for crimes committed during the insurrection, without his own warrant. Thus it happened that Samuel Sharp was detained in prison several weeks after he had been tried, and sentence of death pronounced upon him, and I had frequent opportunities of conversing with him. He was a man who had read the New Testament, and read the newspapers, and was in all respects a superior man. I asked him what it was that induced him to take part in this movement, since he had never suffered, as many had, under the lash. "Sir," said he, "in reading my Bible, I found the white man had no more right to make a slave of me than I had to make a slave of the white man; and I would rather go out and die on that gallows, than live a slave." The young ladies of the family to which he belonged made him a very handsome suit of white clothes, and I saw him march to his death. I heard the remarks which he made when he stood on the platform under the gallows; and, sir, I could not but drop a tear to see a man like that put to death, whose only crime was, that he made an effort to recover that liberty which is the right of every human being, and of which he, in common with his brethren, had been wrongfully and wickedly deprived.

The insurrection was put down, and the intention which Sharp entertained in connection with it was frustrated. His design was not to do violence to any person or property, but simply to act upon the principle of passive resistance. He argued in this way:—"They will put to death some of us, if we sit down and refuse to work after Christmas, and we must be content to die for the benefit of the rest. I, for one, am ready to die, in order that the rest may be free. They may put some of us to death, but they cannot hang and shoot us all, and if we are faithful one to another, we must obtain our freedom."

Samuel Sharp's plan was defeated in this way: He had not calculated sufficiently upon the impulsive character of the men he undertook to lead in this movement,—upon their not being accustomed to exercise self-restraint; consequently, when some of them broke into the store-houses of the estates, and became intoxicated, and then set fire to the buildings, that was regarded as a signal all over the country, and the works and mills were destroyed on two hundred or three hundred estates, Sharp said, "When this occurred, I saw the scheme was defeated. I knew that the whites would slaughter us without mercy, and our freedom be a long while put off."

But, sir, although the immediate design of Sharp was not accomplished, yet it was ultimately. This very insurrection was one of the events which hastened the abolition of slavery in the West Indies. I dare say my friend Mr. Garrison is sufficiently acquainted with the history of those times to remember that in the Committee appointed by the House of Lords to investigate the whole question of slavery, and also that in the Committee appointed by the House of Commons, the decision on the question of the immediate abolition of slavery turned upon this point,—"Will it be safe to the planters that slavery be continued?" Two of my brother missionaries, who went home for the express purpose of appearing before these Committees, gave it as their opinion that it would not be safe; that these insurrectionary attempts would be repeated and the probability was, that if the British government did not bring slavery in the

colonies to a peaceful termination, it would soon be quenched in blood, and the slaves would emancipate themselves. That conviction was forced upon the Committees of both Houses of Parliament; they reported accordingly, and the doom of slavery was sealed.

Sir, it was my privilege to be in Jamaica when slavery came to an end, and I rejoiced the more to be a witness of its extinction, because I had suffered in common with my brethren, in connection with it. We were sent out as the instructors of the slaves and free colored people. We built churches, assisted by the liberality of the British people, all over the island, wherever we could, and we were sustained by funds contributed by British benevolence, as instructors of the negroes. Well, sir, we were denounced by the planters, from the beginning of our efforts, as spies of the Anti Slavery Society. They had sagaciously enough to discover, at a very early period of our labors, that slavery and Christianity could not long co-exist; that they were essentially antagonistic, and that the one must ultimately destroy the other. Determined to perpetuate slavery, they resolved to do all they could to get rid of Christianity, and keep their people in heathen darkness; and, consequently, throughout our history we were subjected to the most bitter persecution; and, sir, just after the insurrection to which I have referred, the whole white people of the island of Jamaica banded themselves together in an association which they called "The Colonial Union," the avowed object of which was to drive every instructor of the negroes from the island. Eighteen of our churches were levelled with the ground. They dragged the missionaries to prison, got false witnesses to swear against them, treated with brutal violence, and did everything they could to put an end to our labors. But, as they were determined to drive us away, we were determined to remain and remain we did. Though our churches lay in ruins, and we could not gather a congregation, though our societies were scattered, and we were exposed to all the indignities which the anti-slavery advocates have to suffer now in the South, we stood our ground, and by and by we saw the result of all these things. We were much discouraged when these events took place.—When we saw these violent men rampant and triumphant, when we saw our churches in ruins, and our congregations scattered hither and thither, and our mouths closed for nearly two years together, we were greatly discouraged, and we wondered what Divine Providence was working out through all these things. By and by we began to see what it was. By these means it was that that storm of indignation was raised among the British people, that led to the abolition of slavery. They saw there was no chance even of evangelizing the negroes while slavery existed, and they rose in their might, and the British Government was obliged to yield; and slavery, with all its abominations, its chains and whips, its tortures and dungeons, was swept away to be known no more in those colonies for ever.

Sir, I was there when Slavery was abolished. I saw the monster die. This day, twenty-four years ago, I stood up late at night, in one of the churches under my charge,—a very large church,—and the aisles were crowded, and the gallery stairs and the communion place, and the pulpit stairs, were all crowded, and there were thousands of people round the building, at every open door and window looking in. This was at 10 o'clock at night, on the 31st day of July. We thought that it was right and proper that our Christian people should receive their freedom as a boon from God, and in the house of prayer, and we gathered them together in the church for a midnight service. It was my privilege to stand up in that congregation, and to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison doors to them that were bound." Sir, our mouths had been closed about slavery up to that time. We could not quote, without endangering our lives, a passage that had reference even to spiritual emancipation. These planters found treason in the Bible and sedition in the spiritual hymns of Watts and Wesley, and we were obliged to be careful how we used them, and in what connection we used the word liberty; because they had a law,—the law of "constructive treason," it was called,—that doomed any man to death who made use of language tending to excite a desire for liberty among the slaves. You may imagine, then, with what feelings I saw myself emancipated from this thralldom, and free to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of prison doors to them that were bound. I took for my text that night, Leviticus 25; 10 By and by, the midnight hour approached. When it was within two or three minutes of the first of August,—the day appointed for the liberation of the slaves, I requested all the people to kneel down, as befitting the solemnity of the hour, and engage in silent prayer to God. They did so; and, sir, I looked down upon the silence into broken by the sobe of emotion which it was impossible to repress. By and by the clock began to strike; it was the knell of Slavery!

It was the stroke which proclaimed liberty to eight hundred thousand human beings! And, sir, what a burst of joy rolled over that mass of people when the clock struck, and they felt they were slaves no longer! They remained on their knees a moment, and then I told them to

rise. They did so; and, sir, it was really affecting to see, in one corner a mother with her little one, whom she had brought with her, because there was no one at home to take care of it, clap her baby to her bosom; and there was an old white headed man, embracing a daughter; and here, again, would be a husband congratulating his wife in a similar way; and something like confusion was apparent all over the building. However, we made allowance for these seeming improprieties because of the occasion, and by and by all was still again, and then, sir, I have it here. I cannot tell you, so well as you may imagine, the feelings with which these people, just emerging into freedom, shouted,—for they literally shouted,—the hymn which I now read to you:

"Send the glad tidings o'er the sea,—
His chains are broke the slave is free;
Britannia's justice, wealth and might
Have gained the negro's long-lost right!
His chains are broke, the slave is free,—
This is the Negro's jubilee!"

"Hail! blessed and auspicious day!
Dear is thy first bright dawning ray.
Which comes, an angel from above,
Herald of freedom, joy and love:
Thy breezes whisper,—"Slaves, be free!"
Now is the Negro's jubilee!"

"O Thou, whose favor long was sought,
What full deliverance hast thou wrought!
The captive's groan has pierced thine ear,
And thou hast wiped the falling tear.
The curse is past, the slave is free!
This is the Negro's jubilee!"

"Our prayers shall now with praise combine,
For freedom poured on every clime;
For holy freedom, gracious Lord,
To join a world in sweet accord:
Then freed from sin, from error free,
We'll keep a brighter jubilee!"

I hope the time will soon come, when thousands of Christian ministers, with their congregations, throughout the length and breadth of the United States will be able to sing that Jubilee Hymn!

But, sir, I find that I am trespassing upon the time and patience of the audience, and therefore I will hasten to another subject, which I have found, since I have been in New England, is regarded by many persons as of great importance, namely, The Working of Emancipation in the British Colonies.

I have been told, since I have been here, that emancipation, it is understood, has been a failure. I am prepared to give this statement an unqualified contradiction. There is no sense whatever in which the emancipation of the slaves of the British colonies has proved a failure. Sir, emancipation has not proved a failure in this sense—the people are all free. It has not failed to break their chains and set them free. In that it is no failure, but a blessed reality. Then, sir, I am told that the people are worse off in freedom than they were in slavery, and in that sense emancipation has proved a failure. But, sir, it is not true; and I wonder, I have often wondered, how any man with common sense could for a moment entertain such an opinion. Sir, the people now, throughout the British colonies, have their own time at their disposal—their whole time. This was not the case in the days of slavery. The only time they had at their disposal then was one day in two weeks, to cultivate their provision grounds and procure the necessities of life, and the Sabbath to go to market, and for religious worship, if they chose. That was all the time the people of Jamaica had at their disposal under slavery. Their masters did not give them food or wages, but they gave them a piece of land,—it might be two or three acres, if they could cultivate them,—sometimes four or five, even ten or fifteen miles away from the estate on which they resided; and they gave them one day in two weeks to raise provisions upon this piece of land,—and that was all, except a little salt fish now and then, with which to season their provisions. Now, sir, the people have all their time; they can spend it to the best advantage, according to their own judgment, and according to their views of their own interest. Then, sir, the people now have the Sabbath. Formerly it was impossible for them to keep holy the Sabbath day; they had to go to market on that day; and when their market was over, they would bring their baskets and trays to the place of worship, and deposit them there,—having taken some opportunity to change their apparel,—while they went into the sanctuary to worship God. That was all the Sabbath the negro had. The Sabbath market prevailed over the whole of the West Indies, and there was more business done on that day than on all the other days of the week. All this was brought to an end by emancipation. The negro now spends the whole day with his family in the house of prayer and in the worship of God, according to the dictates of his conscience.

Then, sir, the negro is free from the liability to the lash. It is true, that for some years before emancipation, the law limited the master's power of punishment to the infliction of thirty-nine lashes at one time; but the master had only to take care that none but slaves were witnesses, and he might inflict three hundred and ninety lashes instead of thirty-nine, with out the slightest apprehension of punishment, because the testimony of a slave could not be received against his master, whatever he might do. Now, sir, the power of punishment was taken from the hands of the master, at the time of emancipation, and placed in the hands of the

magistrate, responsible to the public and to the government for the manner in which he uses his authority.

Then, sir, families are no longer liable to be scattered; the child cannot be sold away from the parent, nor the wife from the husband, as used to be the case in the days of slavery. Although, for some years, this was prevented by the ameliorating measures introduced by the British Government, before emancipation, yet in the times of ancient slavery, the wife and child were sold and separated from each other, and from the husband and father, without the slightest feeling or compunction, just as now in the Southern States of this Union. All this has passed away.

Then, sir, the negroes have their own houses. Nearly all the black people in Jamaica are freeholders. They have their own pieces of land, and their own cottages erected upon the land, and there they dwell, under their own vine and fig tree, no man daring to molest or make them afraid.

Then, they have the disposal of their children. They can send them to school, or take them to work in the field, at their pleasure.

All these beneficial changes have been wrought by emancipation; and yet we are told that emancipation has failed to improve the condition of the colored race. Sir, it is one of the many falsehoods got up by the pro-slavery party, to blind the eyes of the friends of humanity in this country, and promote the interests of slavery. It is a falsehood, and I denounce it as such. Throughout the British West Indies, in every island, the condition of the people is incomparably superior, in all respects, to what it was in slavery.

TO BE CONTINUED.

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TO BE CONTINUED.

Wheat from Europe.

This seems a strange perversion of the proper and natural current of trade, but we have advice, by the last steamer, of the shipments of this article to Philadelphia. A lot of eight or nine thousand bushels on its way from Liverpool, is now offered for sale by samples, and will probably pay a good freight. Harrah for Democratic rule! How the country is prospering under it! Importing bread-stuffs into an agricultural country! Well, that is the latest! We will go on importing dry goods, bread-stuffs, etc., until the people have no means to buy, and then we will go smash! Splendid policy!—Great country!

Danger of Educating Irish Democrats.

In a manufacturing village near Hartford, a zealous Democratic schoolmaster devoted his evenings, for some time before the late election, to the instruction of a company of Irishmen, in order to fit them to become Democratic voters. After getting them educated up to the requirements of the statute, which requires them to be able to read the Constitution, he took them to Hartford and had them naturalized, and relied with great confidence on their voting "the right ticket." When election day came, however, the schoolmaster was puzzled and mortified to see nearly all his hopeful pupils vote the Republican ticket. "The causes," he said, "had turned against him, after he had spent more than a hundred dollars on them." The incident shows the perils of education to the Democratic party.

A Sickles Case in Madison.

We learn from a gentleman from Madison, Ind., that the inhabitants of that city were thrown into a state of excitement by a lamentable affair occurring on Saturday night last. It appears that for some time past a citizen engaged in the sallery business, has entertained suspicions of the virtue of his wife, and resolved to satisfy himself in regard to the matter. Accordingly on Saturday last, he informed, he informed his family that he should leave in the evening for Cincinnati. About 9 o'clock, however, he returned unexpectedly to his home and found his worst fears realized. A neighbor of his who was possessed of considerable means, was the intruder. The injured couple found the guilty couple in bed, and without an instant's delay, he drew a revolver and shot the seducer dead. He then left the house and gave himself up to the authorities.—*Cincinnati Times, April 11.*

One pleasant Sabbath morning, recently, while Henry Ward Beecher was on his way to church, he found the sidewalk occupied by a number of boys, playing marbles upon which he stopped short and exclaimed—"What, boys, playing marbles on the Sabbath day!—why you frighten me?" Upon which a hardened little sinner looked up and answered—"Frightened, ha! why in the d—l don't you run, then!"

Two German brothers, in Calkoun county, Ill., married two German sisters. The elder brother fell sick, and the younger brother ran away with the sick man's wife. The convalescent brother then followed with the other wife, and now wants to swap back, but his own wife, who has tried both, says neither of the brothers is worth having.

"I live in Julia's eyes," said an affected dandy, in Coleman's hearing. "I don't wonder it," replied George, "for I observed she had a sty in one of them when I saw her last."