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(BY REQUEST)

West India Emancipation Vindicated.

Speech of Rev. Henry Bledy, Missionary from Barbadoes, at the Anniversary of West India Emancipation, at Abington.

CONCLUDED.

Then, I am told, if it had not ruined the laborer, it has ruined the planter.—Sir, I deny that as plainly as I deny the other. I might maintain, with great propriety, that if many West India proprietors were ruined by emancipation, they only got what they deserved. I do not, however, take that position, but I say this: that it was not emancipation, but slavery that ruined those who were ruined. They were ruined long before emancipation took place. I would recommend our friends who can do so to read Montgomery Martin's History of the British Colonies, published in 1851,—a new edition of a warmer work. There it is shown, to a demonstration, that long before Buxton and Wilberforce lifted their voices in the British Senate to advocate the emancipation of the negroes, the colonists throughout the West Indies continually complained that they were ruined. And so wonder that they were ruined. There was a condition of things existing under slavery, that must inevitably ruin any landholder under the sun. Just look, sir, at the condition of a West India estate under slavery. There were four or five hundred slaves. It is true, the master did not go to much expense in providing them with luxuries, or even with food, but he had to bestow upon them so many yards of cloth a year, and several other small articles; that was one item of expense. Then, to superintend the labor of these slaves, there must be four book-keepers, as they were called, one to superintend the still, another the boiling-house, another took care of the cattle on the estate, and another, if not two or three, superintended the people in the field. All these had to be fed and salaried. Then there was an overseer of the estate, with his harem, and he, too, living at considerable expense out of the estate, and at a high salary. Then, over all was the attorney, in the absence of the proprietor, who managed the affairs of the estate, disposed of the produce, and provided the cattle and other materials for working the estate. Well, he took his commission out of everything the estate produced, and occupied, at his pleasure, what was called "the great house," and having his harem there.—Then, sir, there was the proprietor, with his family, living in France or England, in precisely style,—and all this to be drawn out of the produce of one estate. I should like to know whether there is an estate throughout the length and breadth of this country, that could sustain such a drain as this,—whether there is any property that would not be brought to ruin, with so many living upon it and out of it.

It was that process that brought ruin upon many of the West India proprietors. And, sir, emancipation proved a boon to them. The compensation money enabled them to lessen the mortgages on their estates. By this expensive method of working the estates, and this expensive style of living, the merchants, who had also their commissions to take out of the estates, became mortgagees, by making large advances on the property; so that when emancipation came, there was not one estate in fifty that was not mortgaged to the full extent of its value. Emancipation came, and instead of being a curse it proved a blessing to the proprietors. Suppose they had four hundred slaves; they would receive, on the average, not less than twenty pounds for each,—about £8000, or \$40,000 for the whole. It is true, the mortgage took this compensation money; but then, the estate was relieved to that extent, and many of the proprietors were going on with a fair prospect of working themselves clear of their difficulties. Then came another sweeping change. You remember the free trade policy adopted by the British government during the ministry of Sir Robert Peel. Among those measures was one equalizing the sugar duty, and throwing the freed colonies of Britain into an unequal competition, or a competition for which they were not prepared, with Cuba and Brazil, where the produce was raised by slave labor. I do not find fault with that free trade policy; indeed, I do not express any opinion upon it at all, for I am not much of a politician; but this change came upon the colonies prematurely, before they were prepared for it, and the consequent reduction of the price of sugar to an extent which rendered it unremunerative, forced some of the planters to an abandonment of their estates, which passed into the hands of the merchants. In Antigua, some of the best estates on the island are held by the merchants, who obtained them in that way. The

English house of Shand have several, which came into their hands by the foreclosing of mortgages. It was in this way not by emancipation, but by slavery and its concomitants, that the planters were ruined.

Now look at the West Indies as they are. In the island of Jamaica, we are told there is a satisfactory state of things. I cannot speak of that island from personal knowledge, because I have not been there within the last ten years. But I can say, that before I left, no less than fifty thousand colored people had become freeholders, as the fruit of their own industry. Yet we are told these people will not work. How did they obtain these freeholds, then? Some of their houses are richly furnished, with mahogany bedsteads and sideboards. How did they get these, except as the result of their own toil?

I was in Jamaica when the railroad was built, extending some fourteen or fifteen miles from the city of Kingston. I was acquainted with the manager of the works. There were considerable engineering difficulties to be overcome. The road was built entirely by colored people, and the manager of the works told me that he could not desire people to work better than they did; that he could obtain workmen to any extent, and why? Because, he says, on Saturday evening, when they have finished their work for the week, they have their wages, it was not so upon the estates, sir; and that is the reason why hundreds and thousands of the colored people of Jamaica have retired from work on the sugar plantations. I know that many hundreds of them were defrauded of their wages. One of those great planting attorneys, who had some fifty or sixty large estates under his care, made it his boast, in the presence of a friend of mine, after the act of emancipation came into force, that he made those estates pay well, because he cheated the people out of half their wages, by one method or another. That was the difficulty. After the people were emancipated, before they obtained land and houses of their own, they occupied the land and houses owned by the proprietors, which they had occupied when they were slaves, and the overseers made them pay their rent three or four times over. You must pay, they would say, so much in labor for the rent of your house; then the wife was required to pay an equal amount, and if there were two or three adult members of the family, each one was required to pay the rent of the cottage in labor; and thus they managed to get out of the people rent four times over in many cases, and in numberless instances, three times and twice. I happened to occupy a position which brought me much into contact with the laborers, and therefore I knew of the operation of this evil. The colored members of our churches contributed towards the maintenance of the churches, and towards the maintenance of the ministers; and very frequently the missionaries were told, when they could not give their usual contributions, that they could not obtain their wages; and upon one occasion, a poor man, whom I knew well, whom I had taught to read and write, who had promised five dollars for the erection of a school-house and church in the neighborhood in which he lived, came to me and told me he was very sorry he could not pay the money, because his employer had wronged him out of all he had earned for several months,—and that employer was a man who had a salary of one thousand pounds in connection with an office which he held under the government. The poor man had labored until his wages amounted to sixteen doubloons—over two hundred and fifty dollars, and then his employer took the benefit of the Insolvent Debtor's Act, and never paid him or his fellow-laborers—there were two or three hundred of them—one cent of what they had earned by the labor of several months. Is it surprising, then, that the colored people should choose to cultivate their own two, three or five acres of land, and get what they could off that, and refuse to go to work upon the plantation when they were expected to do the work of freemen on the terms of slavery?

These sir, are the evils which have wrought out those results which have seemed, for a time, to justify the statement, that the people would not work in Jamaica. They are passing away. A recent number of the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, published at New York, which was put into my hands a day or two ago, contains a long report from one of the leading anti-slavery men in this country,—Mr. Charles Tappan,—of a visit which he has been making to the West India Colonies within the last few months; and he says, in reference to Jamaica:—

"The alleged want of labor is a false cry. To cultivate the whole area of land at the present lying waste in all the colonies—except Barbadoes—would, indeed absorb any number of laborers; but the evidence is overwhelming that no addition to their number is necessary to meet the demand for the estates that are actually under cultivation. Where labor is said to be deficient, it can be traced to causes within the planter's control to remove. Of these, insufficient wages, unpunctual payment of the same, or no payment at all, are stated to be the chief.—Immigration on the present system is condemned as expensive and unsatisfactory, injurious to the people who are in-

duced, and to the native colonial population.

The allegations of idleness and immorality, which have been propagated by *The Times*, are indignantly repudiated as gross calumnies, and the writers are challenged to produce the proof of their reckless statements. The Committee feel satisfied that all unbiased persons who read the annexed communications must come to the conclusion that the negro population of the West India colonies have been shamefully misnamed, and that the demand for "immigrant labor" proceeds from a desire to graft upon free labor a system of forced service, which is totally incompatible with the spirit of the Act of Emancipation."

So much for Jamaica. I cannot say much about its present condition; for I have not been there for ten years. But sir, I have been in Barbadoes, and there I am laboring at present, as a minister amongst the colored churches, and I can tell you the state of that island. Sir, that island, even in the most palmy days of slavery, was never in such a state of prosperity as it is now. This very year, the long drought lessening the crop of sugar, yet they have raised, with no greater amount of labor than in the time of slavery, more than double the amount of produce they ever raised under slavery. That is the result of this year's labor.

Now, let us look at the value of property in that island. If emancipation has ruined the proprietors or the work-people, if emancipation has proved a failure, how is it, sir, that on the island of Barbadoes, you cannot get an acre of land for less than four or five hundred dollars in any part of the island? That is the truth, sir. I know of an estate in my own neighborhood, of not more than two or three hundred, which was transferred to other hands for £18,000—equal to nearly \$40,000 of our money—and that paid in cash. Where is there a farm of the same extent in the United States, that will bring a price equal to that? I wanted to buy a piece of land, within the last twelve months, to build a school-house upon. It was nine or ten miles away from the town, and consequently not a building lot, and there was no circumstance associated with it to render it of extraordinary value. I was offered a piece,—the eighth of an acre,—for how much, do you think? *Four hundred dollars!* That was at the rate of \$3,200 per acre for land in the country.

I occupy a mission station about nine miles out of Bridgeton. I have two acres of land, upon which stand the place of worship, the school house, my place of residence, and the teachers' residence. I wanted to enlarge our boundaries, and there were two acres of land, belonging to a small estate in the neighborhood, and separated from it by a road-passing through. It joins my residence, and would be very convenient in all respects, except that half of it is very rocky; but the owner would not let me have it for less than one thousand dollars, and I could not make the purchase, because the price was so high. I have known an estate of three or four hundred acres sold, within the last eighteen months, for £10,000.—It is situated very near the city, and that is the reason why the price was so much higher than the other one to which I have referred. These facts speak volumes in regard to the "ruin" of British planters by emancipation.

I will tell you what sort of "ruin" has been brought upon those islands. You will please to understand that I did not furnish myself with facts before I came away; they came to me incidentally. I had no idea that I should have a word to say upon the anti-slavery question, or I would have come better prepared with statistics. I am building some schools for the children of our colored congregations; and I have been round begging money of the proprietors. Among the rest, I waited upon Mr. Carrington, who owns two estates within sight of my sitting-room, and he gave me forty dollars towards my object; and while there, I learned these facts: that last year, he made on the two estates together, comprising between 600 and 700 acres, three hundred and three hogheads of sugar. This year, he resolved to make an effort to extend his cultivation, and enlarge the produce.—He did so. He employed laborers to cover all the rocks with soil, digging mud out of the ditches and out of the pond, and covering up every yard of naked rock, and planting cases upon it. He built, instead of the old wind mills, which had been in use from time immemorial, two steam engines, and put up on one estate a double row of coppers for the manufacture of the sugar. What is the result? He has raised seven hundred and fifty hogheads from those two estates.—Now, apart from the capital he expended in improvements, and in building, the molasses, the draining from the sugar, would go a long way towards paying the working expenses of these estates; and he would carry into English market seven hundred and fifty hogheads of sugar, would sell them, I dare say, at not less than twenty pounds per hoghead, and would thus realize, from those two estates, more than sixty thousand dollars for the present year. That, sir, is the kind of ruin that emancipation has brought upon the West India islands.

So in Antigua. I lived three years in Antigua before I went to Barbadoes, and a friend of mine there, a member of my own church, bought an estate, that was

sold under a decree of Chancery, for £5000. He has taken off three valuable crops, which have more than repaid the original purchase money; and he has been offered £10,000 for the property, and refused it. That is the kind of "ruin" that has come upon the West India islands because of emancipation.

Then, sir, look at the moral condition of these islands. The moral condition of Barbadoes will compare favorably with that of any other civilized country. I believe the criminal statistics of Barbadoes, for the last five or six years, would compare with any other country under heaven, without disadvantage. We seldom hear of anything like serious crimes.—Then, sir, the vice of intemperance is not prevalent among the people. I have a membership of seventeen hundred colored persons, and during the last two years I have not had one single case of intemperance reported to me, in connection with our disciplinary proceedings.

Then look at our churches. Every Sabbath, they are inconveniently crowded by people anxious to receive instruction. I know of no people in the world who will make such efforts and exercise such self-denial to obtain education for their children as the people in Barbadoes. I will mention one little incident that occurred only a day or two before I left to come to this country. One of my own church members, a colored man, had just finished manufacturing his little portion of sugar, grown on a part of the half-acre of land on which he raised the provisions for his family, and he brought me six dollars and requested that I would receive the money in advance as school fees for his four children for the next twelve months. That, sir, is the only instance I ever heard of in my life of a man in his condition, pre-paying the education of his children for twelve months. He resolved, whatever else suffered, his children should not suffer the loss of education; he had secured it for them for the next twelve months.

The people are willing to do all they can to raise themselves, and they do raise themselves. I have heard since I have been here, that colored people in this country do not make efforts to raise themselves out of their degraded position. [A voice—"That is not true."] If it be true, I do not wonder at it. I do not see how any people can lift themselves up against the weight of discouragement that seems to be cast upon them in this country. When I came into Boston, two or three weeks ago, I went into a hotel, and the very first thing that arrested my attention was this:—A play-bill hung in the office of the hotel, on which I read—"Colored people admitted only to the gallery." That alone was sufficient to satisfy me that they are laboring under discouragements, difficulties and prejudices which must exercise a blighting influence upon them, and must necessarily keep them down. The colored people of the British colonies have outlived all this, to a great extent. Lord Mulgrave, when he came out as Governor, in 1832, took noble ground in this respect. The law which had placed the colored people of the colony on an equality with the whites had just come into operation. Formerly, in all those islands, as now in the South, a colored man could not sit in the jury box,—[A voice—"He cannot in the Northern States"]—nor on a coroner's jury; he was not allowed to exercise the elective franchise; he could not hold any office under our government, either civil or military, and up to within a short time he could not inherit any property, except within a very limited amount. Well, sir, a law was passed, and went into force, which did away with all their legal disabilities; still, they were subject to the same discouraging prejudices that I find existing here, to a great extent. A white man would have felt himself degraded by sitting down to table with a colored man. Lord Mulgrave determined to put his foot upon this evil, and he invited some of the most intelligent and respectable colored ladies and gentlemen,—those whose wealth, intelligence and position in society entitled them to such a mark of distinction,—to his parties. He made it a point to dine with colored ladies himself, and he introduced colored gentlemen to Lady Mulgrave as partners, with whom she dined; and when some of the colony gave the cold shoulder to these colored guests, he caused it to be intimated to them, that if they expected invitations to the Government House, his guests must be treated by them with the same respect and courtesy he manifested towards them himself. That, sir, did more than anything else I know of to put an end to the reign of prejudice upon that island. Very soon, the colored people began to mingle upon equal terms with the whites; they met together in private parties; and soon the colored people, by the exercise of the elective franchise, acquired a considerable degree of political power; and now it would be the ruin of any public man in Jamaica to have it known or suspected that he cherishes any prejudice whatsoever against his fellow men on account of color.

Sir, the colored people, removed from under the discouraging influences to which I have referred, show themselves able to cope with the white man under any circumstances. Take, for instance, the present head of the Jamaica government—Edward Jordan, a colored man; his dark skin and his frizzly hair show him to be nearly allied to the African race on

one side, as he is to the white race on the other. I remember the time when Edward Jordan,—who acquired all the learning he had from our mission schools,—stood within the shadow of the gallows, and had a very narrow escape for his life,—and for what? It was in the days of slavery, and he was a leader in the anti-slavery party. He had taken an active part in the agitation which ended in the removal of the legal disabilities of the free colored people, and then he stood up to agitate for the abolition of slavery, having started a semi-weekly newspaper called the *Jamaica Watchman*; and in the beginning of 1832, there was a pro-slavery man, who had been a leader in that party who suddenly came over to the anti-slavery party, and took active measures to ameliorate the condition of the colored people, and prepare the way for the abolition of slavery. Well, sir, in the newspaper controversy to which this gave rise, Mr. Jordan wrote the following sentence:—"We are glad to see Mr. Beaumont coming over to the right side, and we shall be glad with him and all the friends of humanity, to give a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together, and bring down the system by the run, knock off the fetters, and let the oppressed go free." That was the sentence. The following week, as he sat in the Supreme Court, reporting for his paper, to his utter astonishment, he heard his own name proclaimed by the clerk, under indictment for a capital felony—"constructive treason. He had never heard a whisper of it before but he was taken from his seat placed in the felon's dock, and arraigned upon that capital charge; and it was with the utmost difficulty that his counsel, Mr. Watts, also a colored man, succeeded in getting his trial postponed for two days, to prepare his defence. The prosecution failed, because they could not prove the publication of the paper; but there was a regular plot against the life of Mr. Jordan, to which the Governor, Lord Belmore, (to his shame be it said,) was a party, he having agreed, if Mr. Jordan was convicted, to sign the warrant for his execution.—He was removed shortly after for incompetence, and then came in the noble Lord Mulgrave, now Marquis of Normandy, to whom I have referred.

But this effort to destroy Mr. Jordan, only placed him upon an eminence. The colored people rallied around him. They had the control of the elections in Kingston; and at the next ballot they elected him as their representative of the commercial capital of Jamaica, which position he occupied for twenty years. A bout the time I left the West Indies, he was called into the upper branch of the legislature, the Council, and now Mr. Jordan is Prime Minister of Jamaica, the head of the Cabinet. He occupies the same position in Jamaica, as the Earl of Derby in England, and he is a man who commands the respect of all parties and all colors in the community.

Then, sir, there is Mr. Richard Hill. He has been for twenty years the head of the stipendiary magistrates' department in that island, and a man of well known ability and information; indeed, he is looked up to by all parties on the island as authority in all matters of natural science. Mr. Hill is also colored, only one remove from a black man; that is, he is the child of a black mother, having a colored father. Mr. Hill is a man whom any man might be proud to call his friend; a man of masterly intellect, a perfect gentleman, and everything that a man ought to be, and I may add, he is a Christian man.

Then there is upon the judicial bench of Jamaica Mr. Montierf,—as only one remove from a black man. His father, who was a man of some wealth, sent him to England, and gave him a liberal education; he was admitted to practice in one of the Inns of Court, made his way to the Jamaica bar, and then to the bench, and is now the second amongst the judges of the colony.

Sir, place the colored man along side, on equal terms, and he will compete with the white. How has Mr. Jordan forced his way? Not by favor, sir, but by talent, and the exercise of that talent. How have Mr. Hill and Mr. Montierf won the positions they now fill? Not by favor, sir, but by competing with the white man, with all the advantages of education and wealth and interest in his favor. Sir, my observation goes to show this: that they make good mechanics, very good magistrates, (for more than half the magistrates in the island of Jamaica are colored men), efficient legislators, (I suppose not less than a dozen in the Legislature of Jamaica are men of African descent,—two of them "perfect Africans," to use an expression common here; one of them has occupied the position he fills twelve or fourteen years, the other, ten years—and occupied them respectively and efficiently.) They make, also, good medical practitioners. One of the cleverest men I knew in the island of Jamaica, and a man who stood first in one branch of practice, was a colored man. They make very excellent schoolmasters. All my teachers are colored men, and I would not exchange them for white men. If I had the choice of a white or colored man as a teacher in the West Indies, I should decidedly give the preference to the colored man, on this account; he can better accommodate himself to his position. In nearly all cases where men come out from Europe to take the position of schoolmasters, they turn out to be failures. We

can only conduct our schools efficiently, by having and training colored teachers, and we do that, and we find the colored man in every walk of life, able to compete, and that successfully, with men of fairer skin.

Then what about the ladies? I can say a good word for them. They make capable housekeepers, devoted, faithful wives, tender and judicious mothers. Sir, it is not an uncommon thing for white men to marry colored ladies. I have known numerous instances of this kind, and I have seen these colored ladies presiding at the table of their husbands with as much grace and dignity as any white lady could display in that position. Sir, give them the opportunity, and they will show themselves to advantage, whether male or female.

I do not know, sir, that I should feel justified in dwelling any longer upon this theme; I fear I have wearied this audience. However, you asked me to enter in detail, upon this question of the failure of emancipation; and I think, although I have done it very lamely, I have stated facts which go to prove, beyond dispute, that emancipation in the British colonies is no failure.

Sir, I am in this country on a special mission. I did not come here to deliver anti-slavery lectures, nor had I, as I said before, any idea that I should have the opportunity of attending any anti-slavery meetings. I came to this land partly for relaxation. The wasting and exhausting effects of a West India climate rendered it necessary that I should take a change for a few months, and I determined on coming to the United States; but my principal object was on which to seem very important. I told you that I am a teacher of the colored race, and I have been all my life a minister among the colored people. In one thing we are behind in the West Indies, and that is, education. We have not, as you have in this country, a well organized system of instruction, that embraces all classes, and gives them a first-rate training not only for the life that now is, but for that which is to come. We have hardly succeeded yet in really continuing those who hold the reins of authority in the West Indies, that it is not dangerous to educate the lower classes; and, consequently, we have not, in those islands, anything like a general system of education for our children, and we are obliged to do by private effort what ought to be done by the government, and what has been done by the government of this country.

Now, sir, in the island of Barbadoes, the government have been brought to just this point; they will help the schools,—that is they will pay half the salary of the masters, when they are established, but they will not establish any, or help in building school-houses. Against this difficulty we have to labor. I have seven hundred children under instruction in my schools. I want to increase this number to a thousand, and I am building five school-houses, in order to give them that instruction which will fit them to become useful members of the community, discharge the duties which they owe to society, and make their way to a better life. Sir, I have received from my colored people towards this object, \$1500,—although they are giving me besides for the building and repairs of churches, \$2500; I have raised \$500 more by public lectures; I have gone about begging among the proprietors, and have raised \$500 in that way; I intend to go about begging and lecturing again, and expect to raise \$500 more. But, sir, when I have done all I can, I still shall be short \$2000; and one object I had in coming to the United States was to go among the churches of this country, and ask them to give me help to the extent of \$1000. I have had an opportunity to appeal to some congregations, and I have obtained help to some extent, and I want to lay this matter before the friends here, and beg them to give me a little help. I am working with you in the great anti-slavery cause. I am trying to give the colored people of Barbadoes the means of development,—such development as shall put to silence and shame the falsehood that emancipation has not proved a blessing but a curse to them; and if you will help me in this matter, I shall be heartily grateful for it. Surely, there are fifty, a hundred, or two hundred in this congregation, who can spare a dollar in this cause, or a smaller sum; and whatever you shall feel prompted to give, by sympathy for that object, will be faithfully devoted to it; and I trust that He who has said that cup of cold water given to a disciple, in His name, shall in no wise its reward, will abundantly reward you for what you give to this cause, and to every cause of benevolence, a hundred-fold in the present life, and in the world to come with life everlasting.

Gentlemen in want of garments, made to order, will do well by calling on R. C. Pyle, at his Store, opposite the old Easton Bank, where they will find one of the largest and best assortments of Cloths, Cassimeres, Doekins, Velvets, Plushes, Silks, &c., &c. All orders are promptly and satisfactorily attended to. His ready-made Clothing is equal to any custom work, made in or out of Easton. His tariff of prices are lower than that of any other Tailor in Easton.