

DUBLIN STATISTICAL SOCIETY.

THE
ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

CONSIDERED,

WITH REFERENCE TO THE STATE

OF THE

WEST INDIES SINCE EMANCIPATION.

A PAPER READ BEFORE THE

STATISTICAL SECTION OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION AT BELFAST,

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BY

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The Abolition of Slavery considered with reference to the state of the West Indies since Emancipation. By W. Neilson Hancock, LL.D.

[Read before the Statistical Section of the British Association, at Belfast, September 2nd, 1852.]

GENTLEMEN,

There is no social question of modern times that has occupied such a large place in the minds of men as the abolition of slavery. This question is at once the glory and the shame of the Anglo-Saxon race. To England belongs the glory of emancipating 800,000 slaves, at a sacrifice of about £45,000,000 worth of property. To the United States attaches the disgrace of holding 3,500,000 of men in the worst kind of slavery.*

The necessity of the abolition of slavery is primarily and essentially a conclusion of moral philosophy, which is manifest to the mind of any unprejudiced person who reflects on the duties of man towards his fellow-man. If we consider the dishonesty of one man forcibly appropriating the earnings of his neighbour; the cruelty of rearing a whole class without hope of bettering their condition; the immorality of destroying the institution of marriage, with the family relations thence arising; the wickedness of denying all education; the heartless brutality of breeding, rearing, working, buying, and selling human beings as slaves, without any conception of human duty, but with the sole idea of selfish greed; if we consider all these things, we shall have no difficulty in coming to a decision as to the wickedness of maintaining slavery for a single hour.

* At the time I wrote this paper I almost despaired of the progress of emancipation in the United States, from the state of opinion indicated by the passing of the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. But it affords a singular illustration of the way in which the means used to maintain a bad system lead to its overthrow, to observe how that law led to the writing of that wonderful work which has already brought conviction to thousands of American hearts. In the concluding chapter of "*Uncle Tom's Cabin*" there is the following passage:—"For many years of her life, the author avoided all reading upon or allusion to the subject of slavery, considering it as too painful to be inquired into, and one which advancing light and civilization would certainly live down. But since the legislative act of 1850, when she heard with perfect surprise and consternation Christian and humane people actually recommending the remanding escaped fugitives into slavery, as a duty binding on good citizens—when she heard on all hands, from kind, compassionate, and estimable people in the free states of the north, deliberations and discussions as to what Christian duty could be on this head, she could only think, 'These men and Christians cannot know what slavery is; if they did, such a question could never be open for discussion,' and from this arose a desire to exhibit it as a living dramatic reality."

When America can produce such gifted and noble-minded women as Mrs. Stowe, and when Americans read her book by hundreds of thousands, the entire abolition of slavery in the United States cannot be far distant.

The decision of the moral question in favour of the abolition of Slavery, renders it necessary to adopt measures to carry that decision into effect; and, in thus carrying out the principle of abolition, it becomes necessary to consider certain questions of jurisprudence and political economy, which have not, and ought not to have, any influence on the decision of the primary moral question.

The questions in jurisprudence and political economy to which I refer are the following:—

1. Should the abolition of slavery be gradual or immediate?
2. Should any preparatory measures be adopted before emancipation?
3. Should any auxiliary measures be adopted along with, or subsequent to emancipation?
4. On whom should the loss of the property in slaves fall?
5. Is it necessary to protect free labour against the competition of slave labour?

As to the first of these questions, experience shows that emancipation ought to be immediate. In the British West Indies there was to have been in some islands an apprenticeship for eight years; but this was found to work so badly, that at the end of four years complete emancipation was granted. In like manner, the system of modified slavery tried in the Danish colonies was found equally unsatisfactory. Indeed, it is manifest that giving the master a property of limited duration in his slave, has all the evils without any of the safeguards of perpetual property; for his self-interest is no longer exerted for the permanent health and well-being of his slave. Besides, the question of emancipation being one of morality, there can be with safety no half measures, no tampering with principle. Once the moral convictions of the community have decided against slavery, legislation should give immediate and complete effect to that decision. In the island of Antigua, where the plan of immediate emancipation was tried, it was attended with perfect success; and Messrs. Candler and Alexander, in their recent visit, found this island to be in advance of the rest of the West Indies in its moral state, and to exhibit the greatest evidence of being an improved and improving community.

The second question I have noticed is, Whether any preparatory measures should be adopted before emancipation. The change from slavery to freedom of the entire labouring population of a country is such an extensive alteration in its social condition, that the laws, institutions, and arrangements of the previous state cannot be those best suited for the new state. It is therefore the duty of those who see that emancipation is inevitable, to make, as far as possible, such previous arrangements that the conditions necessary for the development of free labour may arise as soon as possible. This duty was discharged in Antigua, and the result was most satisfactory. In general, however, this duty is likely to be neglected: for the attention of abolitionists is so entirely absorbed in carrying emancipation, and the attention of slaveholders in resisting

it, that neither party has time to devise and carry out any preparatory measures. Indeed the struggle for emancipation too often induces the slaveholders to adopt a more stringent policy than previously, to prohibit all education, to restrict the powers of granting freedom in particular cases, and to increase the severity of the laws against fugitive slaves.

The effect of this want of previous preparation is to increase the importance of the third question, Should any auxiliary measures be adopted along with, or subsequent to, emancipation.

The first auxiliary measure which falls within the duty of the government is the providing of education.* Whatever opinion may be entertained on the general question, as to the extent to which government ought to provide education for the people, there can be no doubt that, where the law has sanctioned an institution like slavery, necessarily leading to the denial of education, the abolition of slavery should be accompanied with measures to provide for the supply of that knowledge which had been previously withheld. In the West Indies the negroes were most anxious for education, and it is stated with regard to Guiana, "A few years since, when wages were higher, the emancipated labourers contributed largely to the erection of chapels and school-houses, and they were then ready to pay for the education of their children."

Grants, too, were made by the local governments for educational purposes; but, on the first pressure of deficiency, we find these grants likely to be withdrawn. Thus, in St. Kitt's, in March, 1849, an act was passed, withdrawing a grant previously made for encouraging the diffusion of education and moral training among the industrial classes.

Next to education, the most important auxiliary measures are those relating to the organization of tribunals, and the structure of the law of contracts and the law of property in land. Previous to emancipation, the cases in the colonial courts would almost all arise between planters and their agents,—a small class possessed of wealth, so that expensive forms of procedure would not operate so injuriously on them. But, after emancipation, the freedom of labour and of industrial exertion enjoyed by the negroes must necessarily depend on the laws respecting contracts and property, and on the independence and intelligence of the tribunals in which those laws are administered.

One of the greatest benefits which a government like that of Britain could confer on its numerous subjects, would be by a comprehensive code in force in all parts of the empire, to place those

* "The first desire of the emancipated slave, generally, is for education. There is nothing that they are not willing to give or do to have their children instructed; and so far as the writer has observed herself, or taken the testimony of teachers among them, they are remarkably intelligent and quick to learn. The results of schools founded for them by benevolent individuals in Cincinnati fully establish this.—"Uncle Tom's Cabin."

laws which are of universal application on a permanent and lasting basis, beyond the caprice or control of small legislative bodies like colonial councils and assemblies. Of the changes in the laws which a transition from slavery to freedom renders necessary, perhaps the most important are those which are connected with property in land. Under slavery, land is held for purposes of production in properties of a very large size—such as in Jamaica, of a thousand acres—and the whole community is divided into two classes, the first consisting of proprietors, agents, and officials, and the second of slaves. The essential nature of freedom is to give rise to a gradation of classes, and consequently a gradation in the size of holdings. This exists under two perfectly distinct systems, that of landlords, farmers, and labourers, or that of peasant proprietors. The first system exists in the United Kingdom, and in Italy, Spain, and Portugal; the second in Belgium, Switzerland, and France. Now, one or other or perhaps both these systems would naturally arise in any country on the establishment of freedom, and hence the importance of such changes in the laws, as to allow either or both of these systems to arise where necessary for the fair development of production by free labour.

Since the emancipation in the West Indies, the proper auxiliary measures have been almost entirely neglected by the home government, and are but little demanded by anti-slavery advocates. Education has been left to the caprice of colonial legislation, actuated by prejudice against the negroes. The tribunals have never been constructed so as to secure a cheap and impartial decision of disputes between labourers and planters.

The laws as to the tenure and sale of land have never been investigated by the home government, and are consequently in as unfavourable a state for the development of industry as in Ireland. The British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society having at length, nearly twenty years after emancipation, turned their attention to this subject, the mission of Messrs. Candler and Alexander has revealed the sad want of auxiliary measures.

The fourth question I have stated is: On whom should the loss of the property in slaves fall? This question is of considerable importance, for two reasons. In the first place, it is sometimes alleged that the £20,000,000 paid to the slaveholders was thrown away; and again it is said that protection to the planters was part of the compensation, and that therefore the sugar duties ought not to have been equalized in 1846.

The principles upon which this question must be decided are obvious enough. When the moral convictions of the community change with regard to a particular species of property, so as to make it unlawful to possess any article of wealth which up to a particular date could be lawfully possessed, it is manifest that the parties who happen to be possessed of the property on that day are not the only persons responsible for its existence. The entire British community were responsible for the existence of property in slaves; and as long as the institution was allowed to exist, the necessity

of holding slaves was almost forced on the colonists; as in the West Indies it was impossible to get free labour. The loss of the property in slaves should, therefore, fall on the general tax-payers and not on the slaveholders. And the West Indian slaveholders were accordingly amply compensated; their slaves were valued at £45,000,000, and they received £20,000,000 in cash, and have had all their produce kept at an artificially high price by the operation of differential duties, from 1834 till the present time, and the protection will last till 1854. Those who contend that the protection should be perpetual to compensate the planters, have never calculated the sum they did receive in consequence of protection from 1834 till the present time. Whether it would have been better to have paid the planters entirely in cash, and have withdrawn all protection, it is now unnecessary to discuss; for the public mind was not then made up on the free-trade question. There can be no doubt, then, that the West Indian proprietors were fully paid for their slaves, and that the loss of the slave property fell on the British consumer of colonial produce and on the British tax-payers; and however expensive it may be to effect social reforms by such means, it is the easiest and most just course to compensate parties who lose property by sudden changes in social policy. One of the difficulties in the abolition question in America at this moment—one of the circumstances that gives a fierceness to the struggle there going on, is the fact that the central government is not powerful enough to raise an adequate sum to compensate the slaveholders.

The last question to which I proposed to direct your attention, Whether it is necessary to protect free labour from the competition of slave labour? is one of pure political economy.

From general considerations, there would appear to be little doubt that such protection is unnecessary; and that free labour, under circumstances of fair competition, should be able to surpass slave labour. The foundation of all progress in production rests on that first principle which Adam Smith has so wisely placed at the commencement of the "Wealth of Nations"—the division of labour. Now, it is well known that the division of labour never prevails to the same extent in slavery as in freedom. Some of the characteristics of slave states are, that the position of a labourer is degraded; that the community is divided into slaves who work and masters who are idle; and there is scarcely any intermediate class. In free countries, on the other hand, the infinite gradations of labourers, from the humblest to the highest, is at once a consequence and a cause of division of labour being carried to a very high point.

Again, to take only one of the productive forces developed by the introduction of division of labour—the invention of machines—this takes place much more in free states. "Slaves," as Adam Smith observes,* "are very seldom inventive, and all the most

* "Wealth of Nations," book iv. chap. ix. (p. 309.)

important improvements, either in machinery, or in the arrangement of works which facilitate and abridge the labour, have been the discoveries of freemen." "In the manufactures carried on by slaves, therefore, more labour must generally have been employed to execute the same quantity of work than in those carried on by freemen. The work of the former must, upon that account, generally have been dearer than that of the latter."

The superiority of free nations in the invention of machines was placed in a most striking point of view in the Great Exhibition in London. The thoughtful visiter might trace, in the extent to which machines were exhibited as used in the different countries, the degree of freedom enjoyed by the inhabitants.

Indeed, if free labour were not able to compete with slave labour, the moral question respecting slavery would be put in great danger. For, although our duty would not be altered by the circumstance, still it is much easier to get a moral principle adopted in action, when the moral conclusion is shown to be coincident with the economic considerations of self-interest, than when the moral duty cannot be discharged without a sacrifice of a large field for the production of human wealth.

The chief argument to show the impossibility of free labour competing with slave labour is the alleged high wages in the colonies. We observe in it, however, that singular absence of accurate information so characteristic of the arguments adduced in support of paradoxes. The persons who complain of high wages in the West Indies studiously avoid telling us what the wages are which they call high. Before we can estimate the effect of wages in the cost of production, we must know their amount. What, then, are the wages in the West Indies? On this subject I shall quote two authorities; first, a very clever book entitled "Jamaica in 1850," by Mr. Bigelow, an American; and, secondly, the report of Messrs. Candler and Alexander, published in the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* for last year. Mr. Bigelow's testimony is as follows: "The complaint made by Mr. Carlyle is the first thing which a stranger hears out of the mouths of white residents on landing in Jamaica: 'The wages are so high, that nothing can be made off our estates without protection.' They clamour from the house-tops that there is a scarcity of labour, which causes the high wages; and the island is constantly agitated with schemes for the importation of labourers from abroad. Coolies were brought here many years ago from the East, the apprenticeship system was established, immigration from Germany and Africa was encouraged at some expense; but still the complaint is, that wages are ruinously high. I did not meet a single planter who did not insist that it was the unnatural price of labour was sinking them. Mr. Stanley [now Lord Stanley] carried off the same impression, and makes it the staple of his argument for a restoration of the old protective duties on colonial produce.

"Now it never seems to have occurred either to Mr. Stanley or to Mr. Carlyle that their readers might feel an interest in knowing

what the enormous wages were, which failed to overcome the indolence of the 'pumpkin-eating, two legged cattle,' who compose the operative classes in the West Indies. As information on this point seemed to be of the very last importance in determining whether there was a scarcity of labour, or certain constitutional infirmities in the labourers, to overcome which created a necessity for special legislation, I made the current wages of the island the subject of special inquiry. To my utter surprise, I learned that the price for men on the sugar and coffee plantations, ranged from eighteen to twenty-four cents a day [that is, from nine-pence to a shilling] and proportionably less for boys and females. Out of these wages the labourers have to board themselves. Now, when it is considered that, in the largest market on the island, flour costs from 72s. to 81s. the barrel, butter 1s. 7d. a pound, eggs 1½d. to 2½d. each, hams 1s. a pound; does not the cry of high wages appear absurd? Is the wolf's complaint of the lamb for muddying the water in the stream below him more unreasonable? Are wages lower in any quarter of the civilized world? Four fifths of all the grain consumed in Jamaica is grown in the United States, on fields where labour costs more than four times this price, and where every kind of provision but fruit is less expensive. The fact is, the negro cannot live on such wages unless he owns in fee a lot of three or five acres, or ekes them out by stealing. He is driven by necessity to the purchase and cultivation of land for himself, and he finds his labour so much better rewarded than that bestowed on the lands of others, that he very naturally takes care of his own first, and gives his leisure to the properties of others when he feels inclined; in that particular, acting very much as if he were a white man."

The statements of Mr. Bigelow are fully corroborated by those of Mr. Candler and Mr. Alexander. Thus, with respect to Barbadoes they state, "The wages of a first-class prædial labourer, man or woman, are from 7½d. to 10d. a-day, according to the season of the year; that is, whether in or out of crop."

Then, in British Guiana, "the nominal wages of labour are a guilder or 16½d. a day; but in crop-time it is said an able-bodied man may earn half a dollar or 2s.; that is, however, not always to be obtained, or paid for when performed. Numerous were the complaints made to us of the inability of the labourers at certain seasons of the year to get all the employment they desired; and had they not provision grounds of their own to subsist on, they would sometimes be brought to destitution."

In Trinidad, the average wages for first class labourers is 15d. a day. A day's task of weeding under slavery was sixty square feet, and other work in proportion; it is now, under freedom, eighty square feet, and is often performed in six consecutive hours.

In the French colonies, the wages of labour is 10d. a-day.

In Antigua, the wages are reduced to 6d. a-day.

In St Kitt's, the wages are only 6d. a-day.

In Monserrat and Nevis, the ordinary rate of wages is said not to

be more than 3d. a-day; and yet long arrears are due to the peasantry.

In the Danish colonies, the wages are regulated by law at 6d. a-day.

With these facts before us, is it not manifest that the allegations about high wages are not true: and, consequently, all the conclusions from these false statements, about the inherent indolence of the negro character; and about the high cost of production, arising from a high rate of wages, in the West Indies; fall to the ground along with the statements on which they rest. So that there is nothing in the rate of wages in the West Indies to prevent the fair competition of free labour with slave labour.

We have now to examine the proposition, that the experiment of free labour has been tried in the West Indies, and that the present state of the colonies proves the failure of the experiment. On this point, two questions at once suggest themselves. First, what was the state of the West Indies before emancipation? and, secondly, have the auxiliary measures necessary to secure the fair trial of the power of free labour been adopted?

As to the first question, I can refer to the testimony of Mr. Bigelow. The fact most relied on to prove the present state of the West Indies, is the incumbered state of the proprietors. On this point, Mr. Bigelow states:—"I will not attempt to conjecture what a change in the revenue policy of Great Britain might effect for her colonies; nor how far a restoration of slavery would contribute to repair the losses which its abolition is supposed by some to have caused; but of two things I am clear. I am clear that neither course would have saved them from bankruptcy; for they were all mortgaged for more than they were worth at the time slavery was abolished, and when their staples were protected in the English markets by prohibiting duties. I am also clear that if Jamaica was an American state, she would speedily be more productive and valuable than any agricultural portion of the United States of the same dimensions, and that neither the emancipation bill of '33, nor the sugar duties bill of '46 are fatal obstacles to a prosperity far exceeding anything which Jamaica has ever known."

With such testimony before us, it is impossible to ascribe the present state of the West Indies to emancipation alone, and to take no account of the embarrassed state of the proprietors in 1832, and the effects of the withdrawal of protection in 1846.

But the most important question on this subject is the second which I have stated. Have the auxiliary measures necessary to secure the fair trial of free labour been adopted in the West Indies?

On this point, all the information shows that the efforts of the planters and of the local governments have been systematically directed towards the maintenance of a state of affairs as like slavery as possible; and to resist the growth of arrangements suited for the full developement of free labour. The most convenient way of

proving this result will be, to notice the colonial measures under the following heads.

1. Government interference with the natural supply of labour.
2. Unjust taxes on the labouring classes.
3. Unjust restrictions on the exercise of labour.
4. Oppressive laws respecting contracts.
5. Impediments to the granting of leases, and the sale of land.

The great measure of government interference with the supply of labour, was by the encouragement given to immigration—From a return laid before parliament, it appears that from 1834 to 1840 there had been imported into Guiana alone, of Coolies, Africans, and Portuguese, the large number of 45,514, chiefly male adults. The last mentioned circumstance is entirely indefensible in a moral point of view. The direct cost of introducing this large addition to the population is reported to parliament to be £360,615. But this is only a portion of the pecuniary burthen inflicted. There must be added the expense of erecting and supporting hospitals, the maintenance of vagrants, the pay of a large police, and the support of extended prisons.

Not only has the colony of British Guiana subjected itself to a heavy debt, by a process the tendency of which is to supersede creole or native labour, thus entailing an intolerable burden on the community for many years to come; but the planters, for whose presumed advantage the undertaking was commenced, are compelled, from the inadequate physical powers of the immigrants, to pay them in reality higher wages for work performed than they give to the native peasantry.

Then the laws which affect the immigrant labourers.

These people, brought into the colony either at the expense of the imperial treasury, as in the case of liberated Africans; or at the expense of the colonial treasury, as in the case of the Coolies and Portuguese; are subjected to compulsory contracts to labour on plantations *exclusively* for a period of years. Should they attempt, during this period, technically called "industrial residence," but really a state of semi-slavery, to better their condition by accepting engagements off the estates, they are then subjected to a species of monthly tax, varying from one dollar to a dollar and a half, according to circumstances, payable *in advance* for the enjoyment of that right.

Again, any immigrant found beyond two miles from the estate where he is indentured, is liable to be taken up and imprisoned.

In Trinidad, immigration has produced the same laws as in Guiana.

Messrs. Alexander and Candler state:—

"The system of immigration, manifestly an injurious and pernicious one, has induced the same lamentable results as in British Guiana—wretchedness and death to the immigrant, and debt to the colony. The introduction of these immigrants attaches great responsibility and guilt to the mother country that has per-

mitted it, and to the parties in the colony by whom it is promoted. The laws of Trinidad, like those of Guiana, are most oppressive to the immigrant labourers. Under the pretence of promoting their industry, of caring for their health, and of advancing their moral and religious instruction, regulations have been imposed which take from the immigrants of both sexes the right to select their employer; which bind them for a period of five years, and even for a longer period, to labour exclusively on estates; which practically deprive them of any voice in the adjustment of their wages; which make them dependent for supplies on the truck system; which confine them strictly within the districts to which they may be allotted; and in many other ways interfere with their personal liberty, the rights of labour, and the formation of a useful class in the community. The existing labour-laws are essentially of a servile character, and unless greatly modified, will produce the usual results—a degraded peasantry, and much cruelty and oppression.”

Now, with such extensive interference with the supply and exercise of labour, it is idle to speak of the experiment of free labour being fairly tried in the West Indies.

As to the second head, that of taxes on the labouring classes.

In Guiana, contrary to all sound policy, very high duties are imposed on the importation of articles of consumption from abroad. The following is the comparative taxation on necessary articles of subsistence.

Barbadoes - - - - -	11 $\frac{3}{4}$	per cent.
St. Vincent - - - - -	15	„
Grenada - - - - -	17 $\frac{3}{4}$	„
Trinidad - - - - -	18 $\frac{1}{2}$	„
Antigua - - - - -	21 $\frac{1}{2}$	„
British Guiana - - - -	27 $\frac{3}{4}$	„

In proportion to the dearness of food imported from abroad, it is the interest of the labourers to raise it at home, and this forces the labourers to carry on the cultivation of provision ground along with working for the planters.

It is not easy to conceive anything more unjust than to raise, by taxes like those on the necessaries of life, falling peculiarly on the labouring classes, the funds to be spent in introducing immigrants to lower the wages of the classes from whom the taxes are drawn.

When the labourers are forced, by the high price of imported food, to take provision ground, then the colonial authorities immediately commence imposing a special tax on such holdings. Such is the recent tax imposed in Trinidad under the territorial ordinance.

This tax, large numbers of the labourers are unable to pay, and the consequence has been, that their small properties have been seized and advertised for sale by the local government, in order to satisfy the impost and the expenses connected with the same. “Such impolitic measures as these,” say the missionaries, “go far to deprive the colony of a useful body of labourers, who cultivate

provisions for the general market ; to alienate the people from those above them, and to create the suspicion in their minds that the Home, no less than the Colonial Government, by giving its sanction to such laws, is unfavourable to their progress, and intends to curtail their liberty."

Then, in Dominica, a heavy duty has been laid on the exportation of yams, plantains, and other articles of the bread kind.

Here, then, we find as great defects in taxation as could exist ; heavy taxes on the import of the necessaries of life ; in an adjoining colony, heavy taxes on the export of the same produce, and special taxes directed against the labouring classes ; and these taxes chiefly spent in tampering with the supply of labour and rate of wages.

But I now come to the third head—unjust restrictions respecting labour. Messrs. Candler and Alexander state, "The laws most complained of in Guiana are those which relate to licenses, which affect all classes in the community. The system of licensing is not only extremely onerous in the charge imposed for licenses, and the heavy penalties it inflicts, but it impedes every class of industry, with the exception of agricultural labour, and seriously restricts the right of locomotion. No person can expose fruit or any article of food for sale without a shop license, for which he has to pay twenty dollars per annum ; or sell them in town or country without a huckster's licence, which costs ten dollars for the town, and another ten dollars for the country districts. The labourer who needs a boat to move up and down the rivers and creeks, the great highways of the colony, must pay sums varying from two to four dollars per annum, for exercising that right. This is most oppressive, and whatever may be thought of it by the planters, such legislative enactments tend to destroy all confidence between the labourer and his employer, and should be discountenanced by the home government."

Is it possible to conceive any system more artfully framed to prevent the development of free labour ? The planters who have the legislative power, to keep down, as they think, the price of agricultural labour for their own selfish gain, throw these absurd impediments in the way of the negroes rising to any higher species of labour.

Messrs. Candler and Alexander add to their account of Barbadoes this statement :—"The disposition to check the natural distribution of labour has thus been more or less unfavourable to the progress of industry and economical management in these islands ; interfering, as it has in some cases, with associations for the performance of task-work, and in others with some useful branches of general industry."

So it is plain that there are most unjust restrictions still in force against the fair and free exercise of free labour in the West Indies.

As to the fourth head, the system of oppressive laws respecting contracts, it will be only necessary to notice one instance ; which, however, shows very plainly the spirit of making one law for the rich and another for the poor, which actuates the colonial legislatures.

In St. Kitt's, while the labourer is subject to imprisonment under the *Capias* act, as a debtor, for a small amount of rent; the larger occupier, by a clause in a bill then before the house, was intended to be relieved from its operation. Imprisonment on mesne process might ensue for an unpaid rent of five shillings, but in no case whatever where the rent withheld should exceed fifty pounds.

As to the fifth head, that relating to the tenure of land, the facts are equally striking.

The legal condition of the peasantry is not yet on a satisfactory basis, especially as regards the precarious tenure of houses and land, from either of which they can be ejected at a week's notice. A Landlord and Tenant Bill has recently been before the legislature of Barbadoes; but no clause granting a needful security to the tenant was suffered to pass. The planters continue to use the power of summary ejection as a screw to extort labour.

Sir Wm. Colbrooke says:—"The condition of the yeomanry, who cultivate the sugar cane with other produce, stimulates the ambition of the peasantry; who, since emancipation, are eager to establish their independence in the possession of land. If they could obtain leases of their holdings, it is probable they would be content to occupy on this tenure; but as they are not permitted to do so, they make great sacrifices to acquire the means of purchase."

Here, then, we find a complete barrier to the system of free cultivation by landlords, farmers, and labourers.

The impediments to the sale of land are not so clearly stated by Messrs. Candler and Alexander; but I know, from other sources, that they are excessive.

I have thus, in a brief and cursory manner, noticed some of the circumstances under which free labour is placed in the West Indies; and we may conclude that the colonial governments have almost entirely neglected the serious duty of providing auxiliary measures to secure the fair developement of free labour. Instead of such measures, we have had a mass of colonial legislation, all dictated by the most short-sighted but intense and disgraceful selfishness, endeavouring to restrict free labour by interfering with wages, by unjust taxation, by unjust restrictions, by oppressive and unequal laws respecting contracts, by the denial of security of tenure, and by impeding the sale of land. Under such circumstances, it is vain to speak of the state of the West Indies showing that free labour cannot compete with slave labour.

Having thus trespassed, I fear unreasonably, on your time, it remains for me to recal to your recollection the conclusions at which we have arrived, and to point out the moral lessons to be thence derived:—

We have seen, in the first place, as a conclusion of moral philosophy, the wickedness of maintaining slavery for a single hour.

We have seen, in the next place, as conclusions of political economy and jurisprudence, 1st, that emancipation should be immediate, and not gradual: 2nd, where, from political causes, emancipa-

tion cannot be immediate, it is the duty of these who see that the change is inevitable, to make such previous arrangements that the conditions necessary for the development of free labour may arise as soon as possible.

The third conclusion which we have learned is, that auxiliary measures, such as education, reform in the courts of law, and, above all, reform in the laws respecting the tenure and sale of land, are essential, in order that the blessings of emancipation should be fully realized.

The fourth conclusion which has been established is, that the loss of property consequent on emancipation should not be thrown on the slaveholders, but on the community at large.

The fifth conclusion which we have learned is, that free labour requires no protection to enable it to compete with slave labour; that the allegations about the emancipated negroes in the West Indies demanding too high wages are untrue, and the imputations on their character unfounded.

We have seen, lastly, that the state of the West Indies does not show the impossibility of free labour competing with slave labour, but shows the folly of laws which have been passed by the colonial legislature; the folly of the short-sighted selfishness of the planters; and the folly of those philanthropists who, instead of seeking the removal of the laws I have pointed out, demand the exclusion of slave produce to give the planters a monopoly, and induce them to attempt to perpetuate the fatal system they have pursued since 1834.