

**THE WEST INDIA
QUESTION. IMMEDIATE
EMANCIPATION**

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The West India question. Immediate emancipation by Charles Stuart

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CHARLES STUART

**THE WEST INDIA
QUESTION. IMMEDIATE
EMANCIPATION**

Rev. Fredk A. Harley.

THE
WEST INDIA QUESTION.

IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION

WOULD BE

SAFE FOR THE MASTERS;—PROFITABLE FOR THE MASTERS;—
HAPPY FOR THE SLAVES;—RIGHT IN THE GOVERNMENT;—
ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE NATION;—WOULD INTERFERE
WITH NO FEELINGS BUT SUCH AS ARE DISGRACEFUL AND
DESTRUCTIVE;—CANNOT BE POSTPONED WITHOUT CONTINU-
ALLY INCREASING DANGER.

AN OUTLINE FOR IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION;

AND

REMARKS ON COMPENSATION.

BY CHARLES STUART.

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"Am I not a woman and a sister?"

NEW HAVEN:
HEZEKIAH HOWE & CO.

1833.

THE WEST INDIA QUESTION.

GREAT BRITAIN rather totters than stands on a pinnacle—her crimes are gnawing at her heart—every one that loves her, trembles for her safety, and anxiously enquires into the causes of her danger.

It is the object of the following pages to point out one of those causes—a master cause—and to suggest its remedy. Should the writer appear severe, let it be remembered, that no disorder of any magnitude, whether physical or moral, can be removed by lenitives. The medical poison must be given at once; the limb must be amputated; the lust must be crucified while it is not yet too late, or the patient perishes. The writer disclaims entirely, all intention of giving offense. It is the extincjion of crime, not the injury of criminals, which he seeks; and he speaks boldly of criminals, that their iniquity may not prove their own and their country's ruin.

The case to which he alludes is *Negro Slavery*. As a political evil he meddles not with it; but as a moral crime, it is a common nuisance, and fills him with horror and alarm. He finds it an infraction of all righteous law. He sees that it is the bane of all true love; an act of high-treason against God: and an outrage, concentrating in itself all outrages, against man. He cannot believe the Bible without being persuaded, that the fiercest vengeance of Almighty God, the moral and righteous ruler of the universe, is waxing hotter and hotter against us every moment that we persist in it. He knows that amongst the actual possessors and managers of Negro Slave property, there are some of the most honorable men in the nation; men who in other respects are examples of excellent and noble things; but he cannot forget that He who said, "Do not commit adultery," said also, "Let the oppressed go free." "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." "He that loveth not his brother abideth in death." "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." And he therefore cannot permit himself to be blinded by the glare, however bright, of *partial* obedience: a whole heart, a brotherly heart, is what God requires; the undissembling voice of which shall be, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good-will to man," without respect of persons; and not a heart yielded merely so far as may be sanctioned by convenience, or interest, or prejudice; or what men call prudence and benevolence, when they substitute this world's wisdom, for cordial and confiding obedience. In the course of the following observations, where things apparently harsh shall be found, let them apply *only* where they fit; but where they *do* fit, the writer entreats the persons in question, whoever they be, to remember, that

"the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness," and to believe, that as far as he knows himself, this is his motive for writing as he does: not to judge, but to warn; not as desiring to destroy, but as wishing to be an instrument of salvation.

The subject, is Negro Slavery as it exists under British power And the question, is how may it be remedied?

The Negro Slave party, that is, they who are interested, from whatever motives, in the continuance of Negro Slavery, honorable wealthy, talented and united, declare that immediate abolition is forbidden by self-preservation; regard for the negroes; rights of the masters; pledges of government; and national interests. And another reason, not much avowed, but well understood, and of all others the most deeply felt by the great body of managers and of resident proprietors, is the fear of losing that endless variety of gratifications, which the possession of despotic power affords. But of all, few or none under the British empire, pretend at this day, that Negro Slavery should be interminable. All agree that it ought to be eventually abolished; but they require time, in order to avert the dangers, which they anticipate from so a great and sudden a change as immediate emancipation would produce. Now if it can be clearly shewn, that these objections have no force, either in nature or in fact; that the immediate emancipation of the negroes, is the best way to give the masters security, and the negroes happiness; to absolve the duty of the government, and to support or improve the colonial and national revenues: and if it can be further shewn, that delay is a cruel and dangerous delusion: and that the licentious gratifications of despotic power, dear though they be to the sinner, as a hand or an eye, are altogether ruinous and degrading: the difficulties which are heaped like mountains in the way of duty, will be removed, and unless rottenness have altogether gotten hold of us, we shall open our eyes and see how safe, and only safe it is, to obey God and let the oppressed go free.

Can such proofs be supplied; or where are they?

I propose briefly exhibiting them under the following heads, by shewing that **THE IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION OF THE NEGROES—**

- 1st. Would be safe and profitable for the masters.
- 2nd. Would be happy for the negroes.
- 3rd. Would be right in the government.
- 4th. Would be advantageous to the nation.
- 5th. Would interfere with no passions but such as are disgraceful and destructive; and
- 6th. Cannot be postponed without great danger.

But two things must be premised; viz:

I. *The real condition of the enslaved negroes in the British Colonies; and*

II. *What we mean by immediate emancipation.*

1st. The real condition of the enslaved negroes in the British Slave Colonies.

Each estate is a little despotism: the master may imprison,* flog, torture, sell and separate his slaves, under certain limitations essentially more or less inefficient, at his discretion. He gives them no wages; merely supporting them as beasts are supported. He may impose upon them, at all times, an overwhelming amount of labor; and this is left particularly to his own ungoverned discretion, during the season of crop, or for about four months in each year. His slaves may be seized and sold without any fault, or imputation of a fault, for their master's debts. They can be mortgaged like goods and chattels; and the greater number of them could not obtain their liberty, though thousands were offered to redeem them, except their masters pleased. When they come or are brought to England, they are free while in England; but should they return to their native country, they are again made slaves. This is their general condition. Kind masters alleviate it; but it is generally aggravated by unkindness; and where sugar is cultivated, this aggravation is so severe, as to eventuate yearly in the slaughter of thousands of them, by the most lingering and painful deaths.†

But who are these slaves? Or of what enormous transgressions have they been guilty, that they should thus be consigned to a state of such hopeless and consuming oppression? Where is the record of their crimes and condemnation? Who were their judges? By what special commission were they tried?

They are British subjects. The great body of them were born within the king's allegiance, and have never forfeited his protection by any crime. They were never condemned; never tried; never accused. They are unoffending British subjects, with the same rights to the king's protection which any other British subject has;—endowed with property in their own bodies by their Maker, and inheriting a right to the King's protection, by having been born within his allegiance. They are slaves merely because they are in the hands of their enemies, who are stronger than they; and because their king and their country, who are bound by the most sacred ties to do them right, still choose to crouch beneath the pride and wickedness of their oppressors, and, with God's judgments ringing a thunder alarm through the world, to leave his poor to be destroyed.

2ndly. What do we mean by immediate emancipation?

We mean, immediately to treat the unoffending negroes in their true character, as guiltless British subjects; to give them the pro-

* See Jamaica Slave Law of 1831. Regulations for Crown Colonies of 1831. Nine Letters to the Duke of Wellington, by Ignotus. J. Jeremie's Four Essays. James Stephen's 2 volumes. Jamaica Christian Record. Colonial Gazettees, and Parliamentary Papers.

† See Population Returns, as quoted from Parliamentary papers in the House of Commons, by Brougham and Buxton.

tection of the law, until they shall have been guilty of some crime, and have been fairly tried by a jury of their peers, and found guilty; to pay them fair wages for their labor; and to leave them to enjoy the fruits of their industry with their families. In short, we mean, immediately to make them the subjects of wise and righteous laws, instead of leaving them the slaves of private and irresponsible caprice. The following extract from J. Jeremie's work on Colonial Slavery, will fairly introduce our subject.

"Hitherto nothing had been done at St. Lucia, either legally or practically. General Mainwaring had, it is true, advised the planters to make an experiment, in July 1823, immediately on his receiving the original resolutions of the House of Commons; but this attempt, if entered on by some, was soon universally discontinued. The first draft of the slave law was completed at the close of the year 1826, when he had been nearly twelve months in the colony, and had had, as conceived, the best opportunities of forming a judgment. He had taken the most respectable colonial information, had made a tour of the island that he might ascertain, *de visú*, what was the actual condition of the slaves, and had revised carefully every enactment which appeared in the books of the colony.

"The opinion thus formed by himself amounted to this, that he conceived what had been alleged, of the general cruelties of slavery, was a downright misrepresentation; and this opinion was laid upon the tables of parliament in the subsequent year.—But hitherto the slave had not enjoyed the liberty of freely communicating with his protectors; he had not enjoyed those important rights which rendered him in any degree independent of his manager.

"Scarcely was this opinion transmitted, and the new slave law promulgated, than a negro came before him with a collar rivetted round his neck, from which projected three prongs of about ten inches each in length, and at the end of each of those prongs were inserted three smaller ones about an inch long, and these were attached to a chain, reaching to fetters joining round his ancles. His back and limbs were wealed from neck to foot, and he declared that this collar was kept on him by day and by night; that he worked with it in the field; and on his return was immured in a solitary cell; and that this course had been practised for some months in order to prevent his running away, the crime for which he was principally charged. This might however be a solitary instance.

"A commission of three gentlemen of reputed humanity, namely, an officer holding the situation of Procureur du Roi, or official protector of slaves, together with the commandant of the quarter in which the plantation was situated, and the commandant of the neighboring quarter, were sent out to investigate the affair. These gentlemen returned with a written report, wherein not a word of the Negro's statement was shaken. They admitted that there were three other men, at the time, on the estate, with collars of the same description, and that those collars were in use in the country.

"The Procureur du Roi added, that the collars in use were not quite so heavy; but the commissioners, apparently with a view of settling

that point, had weighed the collar, and affirmed that it was heavier than usual. The report also stated, that there was a woman covered with sores, who was found in chains, and had been so chained for near two years; and yet the commissioners reported that the estate was well managed, and that the arrangements were good!—This was not a remote period, but in the year 1826.

“As may be supposed, the report was not satisfactory to others, as to those gentlemen. But no sooner was it known that the law was to be rigorously adhered to than reports of insubordination among the Negroes, and of the necessity of a militia, or some other armed protecting force to keep them in order, were universally circulated; all which not only surprised me but was at that time incomprehensible. A proclamation was however issued against these collars. What followed? Scarcely two months afterwards, other reports were spread of discontent and actual mutiny of so serious a nature having broken out on the same estate, that the principal officers of government were directed to investigate the matter anew. The result was, that in lieu of the collar, the following punishments had been used. The women were hung by the arms to a peg, raised so high above their heads that the toes alone touched the ground, the whole weight of the body resting on the wrist of the arms, or the tip of the toes. The report of a mutiny was mere invention.

“This torture was also put down, one of the offenders fined, and the other imprisoned. But what was the third expedient adopted? The field-stocks,—an invention forwarded from Trinidad, and which was actually legalized by the regulations drawn up by myself—so little aware was I of the severity of the punishment; indeed my attention was drawn to it by a planter himself. The field-stocks are in short, or at least may be rendered, nothing less than the most cruel picketing. They are in the shape of a pillory, the hands of the slave are inserted in grooves, which may be raised to any height above the head, and the feet are inserted in other grooves at the bottom of the instrument, the toes alone being made to touch the ground; the body is thus suspended in mid-air, its whole weight resting on the wrist and toes.”

And it was in view of these facts, not as solitary cases, but as exhibiting a fair, general character of the natural outworkings of Negro Slavery, that J. Jeremie, in alluding to the proceedings at an Anti-Slavery Meeting which he had attended just before he left England, says, “On reading over these proceedings now, it is singular how altered they appear to my mind. With the experience I have since had of Slavery, there is not a sentiment I could not now adopt.”

J. Jeremie's work presents as luminous and fair a picture of the subject as could be drawn. Every person who would know what Negro Slavery actually is, should read it.

And now for our argument.

I. *The immediate emancipation of the negroes, would be safe and profitable for the masters.*

First.—It would be safe. We will take Jamaica for an example.

What is the question?—It is to cease immediately from giving six-seventh's of the whole population, all the reasons which can be given them, to hate us and to destroy us if they could. It is immediately to give them all the reasons in our power to give them, to respect and love us. It is immediately to cease from keeping their interests and our interests at drawn daggers. It is immediately to make our interests and their interests one. Acting as we do at present, we expect safety while we are incessantly goading them to despair and revenge!! and we fear revenge and hatred if we should give them cause for love!! But the righted and the cherished man, as a general rule is always safer than the wronged and insulted one. By restoring them to their unforfeited rights as subjects, instead of leaving them the slaves of the petty tyrants of the plantations, our physical force would be increased—*our wisdom to provide and our power to coerce would remain the same.* And it is entirely out of rational belief, that the same power and wisdom, which are sufficient to keep them in order under the most deadly provocations, should not be able to keep them in order, under the wise and vigorous sway of righteousness and love. When does a man begin to hate you? When you wrong him surely—not when you right him! How long will a man continue to hate you? As long as you continue, to provoke him to do so by continuing to wrong him! How may you get his love? By repenting before God and humbling yourself before your brother—by “ceasing to do evil and learning to do well.” This is the whole secret—God has taught it to us. The history of the world is full of illustrations of its healing excellence. The only difficulty is with the wrong doer. He hates the safe and pleasant path of cordial obedience; he sees a lion in the way, where there is none; he rushes into all forbidden paths to avoid the monster which he has imagined, and then wonders, like an idiot, at the ruin with which he finds himself surrounded; or like a fiend, he turns upon those who have fearlessly in love, done all they could to preserve him, and blames them for what he himself has wrought. The history of the negroes is replete with evidence of their sense of wrong, and of the power of kindness over their minds. Here is an instance.

“In 1794, the negroes in Gaudaloupe, were proclaimed the subjects of law, and were freed from the tyranny of caprice. At the moment, a French gentleman was lying in prison, his four hundred negroes came in a body to the prison in which he was confined, and obtained leave to speak to him.—‘Massa,’ they said, ‘they tell us we free now; we no understand dat; we no know dem massa, but we know you; you always kind to us; we come ask you, massa; you tell us, what we do.’”

Other views concur in proving the safety of the measure in question. Indecision in right, is nearly as ruinous as decision in wrong; it blights whatever it touches. In the case before us, the government is perplexed with all its difficulties; the nation is increasingly dissatisfied,