

EMIGRATION FROM AFRICA TO THE BRITISH  
WEST INDIES.

A PROPOSITION for obtaining emigrants from the continent of Africa to the British West India islands has been put forward by Sir Edward Cust, in his lately published pamphlet on West Indian Affairs, and strongly advocated by several writers, as the means of saving the West Indies, and abolishing Negro slavery. To such a measure there appears at once a strong objection, on the general principles which have hitherto seemed to influence emigration. It has not in this instance been attempted to show that Africa, whence the proposed emigrants are to be drawn, is a numerous and redundantly populated country, likely to be benefited by a reduction of hands found already too numerous for employment at home, for the contrary is well known to be the case. The chief ground upon which the simple question of emigration could be supported appears, therefore, to be wanting ; nor is it at all clear that this preliminary objection to the proposed plan can fairly be removed, either by a reference to the present condition, in which the free inhabitants of Africa are, (the *free* only could, bona fide, become emigrants,) or the improved prospects which emigration to the West Indies is alleged to offer to them. The agricultural labouring classes in Africa are the domestic slaves of the kings and head-men of the country, and are seldom sold into foreign slavery, except for some heavy faults. They receive, in return for their labour, an ample supply of food, and such comforts as their simple ideas suggest the want of; the removal of any of these people from their homes appears, therefore, to be of somewhat questionable advantage in respect to themselves ; whilst the effect of such a course of proceeding will be injurious to the progress of civilization among those remaining in their native land, as we shall hereafter endeavour to prove. Without, however, dwelling too much on this preliminary but important objection to the measure in question, we will look at it in some other points of view, to discover whether, when endeavouring thus to serve the West Indies, as the proposed plan, if carried out, would undoubtedly do, real injury and gross injustice would not be practised towards Africa.

In considering this scheme, it must be kept in view, that the population of Africa in those parts whence slaves have been heretofore exported to America, and which places would, for the best of reasons, be

resorted to for the proposed emigrants to the 'West Indies, the population is divided into two classes, masters and slaves. This marked distinction will, it is believed, be found to have but one exception, viz. the inhabitants of the Kroomen country, a race of hardy, independent **people**, living upon the "Malaguetta Coast," who are all free. It will **be** found that in no case do the *free* inhabitants of Africa, the masters, engage personally in the cultivation of the soil, such an occupation being deemed among them fit only for a *slave*. The Kroomen, indeed, leave the care and production of their provisions almost entirely to the women when in their own country, and when absent therefrom readily engage in any description of labour except agricultural.

The dislike of field labour on the part of the *free* negroes of Africa is not easily to be got over, it being one of the distinctions between **them and** slaves. In the West Indies, where the present race of **negroes** have been trained from their infancy to agricultural labour, they are indisposed to continue it, now that they feel at liberty to employ themselves as they please. Several reasons have been assigned by Sir Edward Cust, in his pamphlet on West India affairs, for the dislike to **field-labour** in those islands, which it is not necessary now to examine, the existence of this feeling among the free blacks of the West Indies being the point **to** which we wish to bring attention. It is asserted, and without fear of contradiction, that the present condition of the *free* Africans along the western shores of Africa is one of ease and comfort, which they are unlikely to exchange for such employment in the West Indies as could be given to negro emigrants. The desired emigrants could therefore only be furnished from the present labouring class of the population of Africa, who are, with the solitary exception of the race of Kroomen, a body of slaves. On what terms, then, may **it** be expected that emigrants will be supplied from among these people? It may be observed, and with some truth, that there would be found many desirous of accepting the opportunity of leaving their masters and their homes, which the proposed emigration would offer them the means of doing, the negro being of an erratic disposition, and abhorring restraint, when in a state of nature. But the master's right over, and interest in the slave, here comes into view, and it requires no stretch of imagination to understand that he would not **peaceably and willingly allow himself** to be deprived of his property in his slave. The slave-owner would reply to the request that his negro might be **permitted to emigrate** to the West Indies for the benefit of our countrymen there, that his consent should not be withheld, **provided** he (the slave-owner) was furnished with the means of obtaining another

negro in the place of the one emigrating. This would be a fair and equitable mode of disposing of the question which would necessarily arise between the emigration agents and the African kings and chiefs, in carrying out the proposed plan, which has been described by Sir E. Cust in these words—to open “a direct negociation with the petty sovereigns of Africa to obtain a supply of labouring families from thence ; the government undertaking the whole management and control of the emigration, both in regard to conveyance and destination.”

In what such a course of proceeding would materially differ from the present export slave-trade, beyond the more comfortable conveyance and increased care of the negroes, it is not easy to discover ; and the nice distinction attempted to be established between the two proceedings, which have alike the object of removing the slaves from Africa, would not be discernible by the native chiefs ; whilst it might afford those foreign states upon whom England has been so long pressing the abolition of the slave-trade grounds for its continuance, Certainly such foreign states would have an equal right with ourselves to a like system of emigration.

In the propositions on this subject it is stated, that “the sole objection to emigration from Africa to the West Indies is, that African emigration might become the disguise of a slave-trade ;” and that such would be one of the results, we have no hesitation in declaring our belief. That this is not an unfounded apprehension, we think can be proved by the results of a very similar course of proceedings—the mission under General Vervier, from the Dutch Government to the king of Ashantee, with the object of raising troops to serve in the Dutch East Indian possessions. This recruiting plan was made public about the middle of the year 1836, in one of the newspapers published at the Hague, and was immediately noticed by the British Government, our ambassador there declaring that “strong apprehensions were entertained that, whatever colour might be given to General Vervier’s negociation, the effect of it must be slave-dealing, and that a transaction of the kind cannot take place in the interior of Africa without unsettling the minds of the people, and putting to hazard the tranquillity of the country.” To this strong opinion of the Dutch plan, it was added, that it could not be too strongly impressed on the Court of Holland, that “the *almost inevitable tendency* of the scheme seems to be to renew those scenes of violence and misery in Africa which it has long been the anxious desire of the Netherlands and British Governments to put an end to.” How far these anticipations were borne out by some of the results of the plan of recruiting in Africa, let the

Netherlands minister himself explain. In a despatch of the 21st Dec. 1836, that functionary states—"Among the men thus enrolled are, it is true, found some who were *formerly* slaves, and who have bought their liberty by means of the cession of a part of their pay to their former masters. Nevertheless, to prevent the abuses which might result from this state of things, orders have already been given to *enlist no slaves for the future.*" On the return of General Vervier, he furnished a lengthened report of his mission, dated August, 1837; the tenour of which established plainly, and beyond a doubt, that nearly the whole of the recruits obtained were slaves, for whom a bounty of £8 or £10 each was given. This sum was their value in the slave-market of Ashantee; a fact which the general endeavoured to explain away, by stating--"It is not to be disputed that if the desire of gain on the part of the prince (of Ashantee) or his subjects, had the unhappy tendency (alleged), that he would for the sum of 100 florins, do that by which he could gain double or treble the sum,"—namely, sending his slaves for sale to the ports of Benin,—“and with no European power in Africa to prevent him.” To this statement the general should, in fairness, have added, that the king of Ashantee is too far from the present European slave-factories on the coast to be able, conveniently, to send his slaves thither for sale; and any attempt to do so could not be made without the knowledge and sanction of the Danish and British authorities there, as the slaves must cross the river Volta, which will appear somewhat to account. for his readiness to allow them to enlist for the *bounty* mentioned. Previous to General Vervier’s mission, a system of *really voluntary* enlistment was adopted for three years by the Dutch Government at Elmina, during which period he obtained twenty recruits. In the few months the general was in Africa there were 150 shipped off to Batavia, and 200 remained in garrison when he left Elmina; whilst the treaty with the king of Ashantee provided that 1,000 more should be furnished within twelve months. Remark upon these facts is needless; they speak plainly for themselves.

The present plan of the Dutch is to have every recruit previously manumitted, by which the letter of the slave-trade conventions may not be infringed, though the great objection still remains; the entire system depending upon the purchase and sale of negroes. It has been justly remarked in the correspondence on this subject, respecting the assertion that the recruits’ “*consent is obtained previously to his enlistment*,” that any one acquainted with the country and its inhabitants must know how futile, practically speaking, such a provision is. A

slave has no will of his own, and he is manumitted only on condition of his enlisting—in other words, he is transferred from a *black* to a *white* master, in consideration of a sum of money paid to the former ; and in what else does the slave-trade consist ? ”

The above particulars have been extracted from unquestionable authority—the papers annually laid before Parliament respecting the slave-trade, and printed by order of the House for public use.

The perfect similarity between the Dutch plan of recruiting in Africa, and the proposed system of emigration under British authority, is so evident as at once to lead to the conclusion that similar results would attend the emigrations—that we should be thereby reviving in some places, and fostering in others, the favourite pursuit of the African-slave-dealing—in the same way that the Dutch recruiting system has evidently done.

It is a somewhat singular feature in the defences of the Netherland recruiting system, and the proposed British emigration measure, that they should have been advocated on the ground of the good which must result therefrom. The Dutch minister, on the 20th May, 1838, says that their recruiting system “ offers nothing which can favour the slave-trade, and that the footing upon which it is executed, so far from being opposed to the letter or the spirit of the treaties for the repression of the trade, will benefit humanity by bettering the condition of the individuals enrolled.” Sir Edward Cust remarks upon the proposal for emigration, that it “ would secure for our colonies a *sufficient amount of labour*, and would favour the civilization and promote the happiness of those people, who are now exposed to the miseries of a barbarous tyranny at home, or to an expatriation under accumulating cruelties that we are unable to prevent ; if it did not altogether put a stop to the slave-trade.”

On the face of these assertions, it is plain that the welfare of the African race is but a very secondary consideration ; recruits for Batavia, and labourers for the west Indies, being the objects to be secured, in support of which, specious arguments are by no means wanting. Let it, however, be admitted that the condition of the negroes, who may become recruits or emigrants, will be thereby materially improved ; but in so doing are we to lose sight of the effect the measures for carrying out these plans of recruiting and emigrating, upon the condition of those whose lot it may be to remain in Africa ?

We are of opinion that many, if not all the evil results which have been proved to follow the traffic in slaves by foreigners, must attend any measures, under whatever title, involving the deportation from

Africa of any of its population who have not been in a state of freedom from their births. Any benefits, therefore, which might accrue to the slaves who leave their homes, would be more than counterbalanced by the miseries entailed upon those who remained ; leaving the advantages of such measures entirely on the side of the parties for whom they might be conducted.

Sir Edward Cust observes, that in proposing to have “ recourse to any supply .(of labourers), under any form, from the continent of Africa, will, he supposes, be deemed such a heresy with the abolitionists, that they will think no one but a colonist,, lost to all sense of humanity, could have dared to recommend it ; and he at the same time suggests, “ that their characteristic benevolence should not make them unjust, even to the West India interest.” The abolitionists, it is believed, have one and all the warmest desire for the prosperity of the West Indian colonies, both as philianthropists and as loyal subjects-unquestionably as philanthropists, if it will be but borne in mind that the welfare of the now free population of those islands mainly depends upon the continuance of prosperity there. It is unreasonable to suppose that the advocates of the Negro race, for whose advancement in the social system they have so long and arduously struggled, were disposed to lose sight of that portion of them settled in our West Indian possessions at the moment their freedom had been secured to them.

It cannot, however, be permitted to seek the prosperity of the West Indies and their Negro population by measures which will in reality be a revival of the slave-trade among the Negroes of Africa by British subjects. Were such proposals to be tacitly acquiesced in, then indeed it would, as has been remarked by the advocates of the measure, “ almost appear that a law of nature has condemned the Negro race to misery ; that in the course of the world’s progress in civilization and happiness, no event occurs to improve the condition of the African ; every circumstance that in any way affects that blood, rather tends to augment its sufferings, and to enlarge the field in which it suffers ; whatever influence it comes under is almost sure to be disastrous.” The duty of the friends of the Negro race is specially to watch over the inhabitants of Africa, and carefully to examine all plans, in the operation of which their interests may be involved, and inquire whether their civilization will be advanced and their happiness promoted in the manner it has in this instance been suggested would be the case.

Whilst upon the subject of measures for the improvement of the inhabitants of Africa, which has been brought into this discussion, we may as well observe, that we entirely agree with Mr. Buxton in opinion

that such measures must be carried out on the continent of Africa itself, and that they can never be perfected while the deportation of the people is continued. In respect to the manner in which Mr. Buxton purposes to effect the objects he has in view, we desire to be understood as not offering any opinion in this article.

Sir Edward Cust preceded his suggestion of increasing the population of the West Indies by African emigration by two other proposals, viz. obtaining free Creoles from foreign colonies or from the slave-ships captured by our cruisers ; upon the latter of which it may be as well to offer some observations.

At the present time, the slaves captured and condemned at Havanna by the Mixed Commission Court established there, are transferred to some of the British West India islands ; and there does not appear any important objection to a like course being adopted as regards the slaves similarly adjudicated at Rio de Janeiro and Surinam. As far as the Negroes are concerned, who have to be emancipated by the Mixed Commissions at Sierra Leone, and then located in that colony, the proposal of settling them in the West Indies appears to be very desirable, if the loose system which has of late years obtained at Sierra Leone is likely to be continued, by which these poor creatures are now turned adrift in the colony, after a few brief months of care, to do as they can for themselves. Under such a loose mode of management, it is not extraordinary that many of these poor, ignorant, and really unprotected creatures are in a short period found in a more low and miserable situation than that of the domestic slaves of the nations surrounding the colony. Should it be the intention of the government, as well as of philanthropists and capitalists, to leave the emancipated Africans to struggle on, unaided and undirected, as they have hitherto generally done, then it must be plainly avowed that these poor people would be greatly benefited by allowing them to be settled in the West India colonies, where skill and capital are ready to profit by their services, and to afford them a suitable return for the same. In making this admission, it is not to be understood that we are disposed to allow that the colony is incapable of maintaining all the emancipated Negroes that may for some years be offered there. On the contrary, we know that hitherto mismanagement has prevented the Negroes settled at Sierra Leone from realizing the wishes and expectations of their friends, and that, under a proper system of government and encouragement, the results would have been such as must have proved agreeable to the friends of Africa. No blame can attach to the emancipated Negroes, who are as industrious as might reasonably be expected of people edu-

cated to desultory labour in their own countries, and who could not as labourers, in a colony where there is not a single agriculturist (except amateurs) of any capital, materially improve their condition. Neither is the soil of the colony chargeable with the failure which has occurred, as it has proved, as far as tried, capable of making a suitable return for proper culture.

In a future number 'we shall endeavour to portray the condition of the people on the Western Coast of Africa.

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OBSERVATIONS ON  
THE CONSTITUTION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF  
NEW SOUTH WALES,

DURING SIX YEARS' RESIDENCE IN THAT COLONY. BY MR. JUSTICE  
BURTON, ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S JUDGES OF THE SUPREME COURT  
OF JUDICATURE.\*

THE colony of New South Wales has been described by a recent writer upon "Its present State and future Prospects," † as extending "from the river Boyne, near Moreton Bay, on the north, to Port Phillip on the south: from the 23d to the 38th degree of south latitude;" and this limit is ascribed to the colony in a map which is annexed to the work. It is observable also, that in a map annexed to a more recent publication, viz. "Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia," by Sir Thomas L. Mitchell, the surveyor-general of New South Wales, the limits of the colony are delineated as being bounded "on the north by the river Manning," which is in about 32 deg. south latitude, and on the south, as extending to the river Moruya (or Murroo), which is in about 36 deg. south, as bounded on the east by the sea-coast from the mouth of the Moruya to the Manning, and extending inland to about 148. 30. east longitude, which is the farthest limit. This latter description has been generally

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\* We have been favoured with the annexed article on the constitution of the government of New South Wales, by Judge Burton, the author of the valuable work to which we adverted in our last, on the "Religion and Education of New South Wales." As the constitution of New South Wales is now on the eve of discussion in parliament, we are happy in being able to avail ourselves of the opinions of a judge, who, in Australia, and at the Cape of Good Hope, has been an ornament to the bench, and a blessing to the people over whom he presided.

† M'Arthur, 1837.

but erroneously considered to embrace the boundaries of the colony of New South Wales ; whilst, in fact, it only includes that portion of the colony within which settlers were permitted to select land under the government regulations, prior to the occupation of Port Phillip, and are no other than the boundaries prescribed for that purpose by the government orders of the 5th September, 1826 and 14th October, 1829. The sole existing authority on this point is the commission of the governor of the colony ; the statute of the Imperial parliament (9 Geo. 4. c. 83.) being silent respecting the boundaries, provides “ for the better administration of justice in his late Majesty’s colony and settlements at New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land respectively.”

It leaves the boundaries to be determined by the possession, and the limits of that possession are thus defined in the letters patent constituting and appointing the governor, viz.\* “ We have thought fit to constitute and appoint, and by these presents do constitute and appoint you the said Sir George Gipps to be our captain general and governor-in-chief in and over our territory called New South Wales, except as hereinafter excepted, extending from the northern cape, or extremity of the coast, called Cape York, in the latitude of 10. 37. south, to the southern extremity of the said territory of New South Wales, or Wilson’s Promontory, in the latitude of 39. 12. south, and of all the country inland to the westward, as far as the 129th degree of east longitude, reckoning from the meridian of Greenwich, including all the islands adjacent in -the Pacific Ocean within the latitude aforesaid of 10. 37. south, and 39. 12. south, and also including Norfolk Island, lying in or about the latitude of 29.3. south, and 168 degrees of east longitude from the said meridian of Greenwich”-the exception is of that part of the territory comprised in the late governor’s commission now called “ South Australia,” which is described as follows :—“ Save and except that part of our said territory herein-before described, which is called and known by the name of ‘ The Province of South Australia,’ and which lies between the meridian of the 132d and 141 st degrees of east longitude, and between the Southern Ocean and the 26th degree of south latitude, with all and every the islands adjacent thereto, and the bays and gulfs thereof.”

The importance of the colony in a geographical view, and of that influence which in time to come it may exercise in the southern hemis-

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\* This extract is from the commission of the present governor, dated 5th Oct., 1837 ; but the limits (*without the* exception) were similarly described in the letters patent of his predecessor, dated 5th June, 1831.

phere, “ occupying as it does between the vast continents of Asia and America, and amongst the isles of the sea, a position so favourable to the growth, if it shall be thereto appointed by Almighty God, of a great empire,” will be hence apparent ; and it may be assumed, it is trusted, that to ensure its future resemblance to its northern parent in national character, in national influence, and in the possession of true liberty, its foundations cannot be too early laid after that model which has made the British constitution so glorious.

Of the present and increasing value and importance of the colony to the empire in a commercial point, may be adduced the facts stated by Sir W. Molesworth in the House of Commons in June last.\* “ The value of the fisheries of Australia has increased with great rapidity. They consist chiefly in the pursuit of the black and sperm whales. In 1828, they produced about £38,000 ; seven years afterwards, in 1835, they had increased nearly sixfold, to £214,000. The value of the exports from New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land in 1828 did **not** exceed £181,000 ; in 1836, they amounted to £1,168,000, or about £15 a head for every free person. The value of the imports into **these** colonies in 1828 was ~\$11,000 ; in 1836, it had more than doubled, being about £1,795,000, or £23 a head for every free person. The shipping of these colonies has likewise doubled during the last eight years. The number of vessels entered inwards in 1828 was 268, with a tonnage of 56,000 tons ; in 1836, the number of vessels entered inwards was 561, with a tonnage of 124,000 tons. In 1828, the number of vessels entered outwards was 202, with a tonnage of 44,000 tons ; in 1836, the number of vessels entered outwards was 541, with a tonnage of **116,000** tons.”

Again, “ Comparing the trade, revenue, and expenditure of the penal colonies with those of the United Kingdom, I find that, in proportion to their respective populations, the exports of the penal colonies are seven times, the imports ten times, the revenue twice, and the expenditure one and a half times as great as those of the United Kingdom.” “ For the purpose of showing the great commercial importance of these colonies, and their value to this country, as compared with other portions of our colonial empire, I have instituted a comparison between their trade and that of the larger of our other colonies. I find that in 1836, the commerce (including under that term the sum of the exports and imports) of this country with the penal colonies, whose population

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\* The debate upon Mr. Ward’s resolutions on colonization in the House of Commons, June 27th, 1839. London : Ridgway, 1839.