
T O B A G O.

THE COMMITTEE of both Houses of Legislature, appointed to take into consideration the Resolution of the House of Commons of 6th April, 1797, and a series of Suggestions and Queries consequent thereupon, handed to them by his Excellency the Governor, and dated Whitehall, 23d April, 1798, relative to the Increase of Negroes and the Melioration of their State, have given the subject that attention that its dignity and importance required, and now submit to this House the result of their labour.

SUGGESTION I.

IN order to obtain the fullest information with respect to the present situation of the Negroes, and at the same time to decide with propriety and effect on the future measures to be taken, it will be essential to review and report the Proceedings of the Legislature of the Island of Tobago on this subject during the last ten years, to state the causes which are supposed to have retarded the increase of the Slaves, the measures that have been taken, and

those that, in the opinion of the Council and Assembly respectively, may be taken, with a prospect of success, for the purpose of obviating those causes.

ANSWER.

THE last ten years have been very unfavourable for improvements of every kind in this Island, particularly to the framing of any laws for the bettering the situation of the Negroes.

During the first five years of that time, that is, from 1788 to 1793, this Island was under the dominion of France, and partook of the general commotions consequent upon the Revolution.

During the former part of the last five years, the attention of the Legislature was principally directed to the means of defence against Recapture by a threatening enemy, more particularly from the contemplation of the barbarous and savage manner in which the enemy carried on the war in the neighbouring Colonies.

No sooner were the alarms of the Legislature quieted by the overthrow of the enemy, and the restoration of tranquillity in our sister Colonies, than the alarms of the Legislature, and of the inhabitants in general, were again excited by the negociations for peace carrying on between Great Britain and France; by which they found that this devoted country was, with others, held out as a peace-offering for the good of the Empire at large.

This consideration has produced such a general dejection in the minds of the inhabitants, as is very unfavourable to permanent regulations.

But your Committee are happy to observe, that although the Legislature has not, for these last ten years, taken any measures towards bettering the situation of the Negroes,
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there has been a very general and increasing disposition manifest in the inhabitants towards that humane and laudable object, which has had very considerable effects; and whether it proceeds from a greater degree of civilization among the Negroes, from the great number of Creoles now mixed with the Africans, or from the Planters being more cautious now than formerly in purchasing Negroes of bad characters from the neighbouring Colonies,—or whether it is a reciprocal effect of greater attention and humanity on the part of the Planter towards the Negro, we shall not take upon ourselves to determine; but the fact is notorious that crimes and punishments are much less frequent upon estates now than they were ten or fifteen years ago, and we cannot but indulge the pleasing hope of seeing them become less so.

The causes which have retarded the natural increase of the Negroes we shall consider under three heads:—

1st. Causes of Mortality.

2dly. Causes which prevent the Production of Children.

3dly. Causes which impede the Rearing of Children.

That greater mortality takes place among the Negroes in this country than among an equal number of the human species in many other parts of the world, is a fact too obvious to require proof.—The causes are numerous.

1st. The natural unhealthiness of the climate; for that it is inimical to the human constitution, and perhaps to animal life in general, is a fact that experience has too clearly demonstrated to the inhabitants of this part of the world.

This cause of sickness and mortality, although it cannot be totally removed, its effects might be mitigated by attention to the feeding, clothing, and lodging of the

Negroes; by preventing them from travelling by night, and by confining night-work in Crop-time within moderate bounds.

Although we are confident that the Negroes in this Island are in general, if not better, at least as well, fed, clothed, and lodged as those in any of the other West India Colonies; yet as there are in all societies some who either, from not knowing their real interest in such cases, do not pursue it, or who, for want of proper motives, are not induced to do justice to those who depend upon them,—and as the community at large cannot profit by regulations for the conduct of individuals, if the observance of them by all be not enforced—we therefore think it necessary, that in the articles of Food and Clothing, the species and quantum should be ascertained by law; and we recommend the following standard for each:—

3 lbs. of salted Pork, or	} Per week for each working Negro, and a proportionable quantity for children of different ages.
4 lbs. of salted Beef, or	
4 lbs. of salt Fish, or	
14 good Herrings	

As the allowance of dry provisions ought to vary according to the seasons of the year, and according to the state of the Negroes' provision-grounds, it is impossible to fix it exactly: we shall therefore only suggest what we think ought to be the maximum, when, from hurricanes or unfavourable seasons, the principal dependance of the Negroes is upon their Masters:—we say principal, because at no season of the year, even in weather the most unfavourable to the production of vegetable provisions, is the sole dependance of the Negroes on their Masters for dry provisions in this Colony, where they have, in general, as much ground, and cultivate it as well, as is necessary for their maintenance. The maximum which, in
such

such cases as we have mentioned, we would recommend, is as follows :

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| 7 Quarts of Wheat Flour, or | } Per week for each working Negro, and a proportionable quantity to children of different ages. |
| 7 Quarts of Indian or Oatmeal, or | |
| 7 Quarts of Ship Stuff, or | |
| 7 Quarts of Indian Corn, Guinea Corn, or Pease, or Plantains, Ignams, Potatoes, Eddoes, or the like, in proportion | |

We are of opinion that the Negroes ought to be clothed twice every year (excepting the articles of blankets, of which we think one in two years sufficient) say in the months of May or June, and in the month of December, viz.

In MAY or JUNE.

MEN.

- A Cloth Jacket
- A Hat
- A Frock, and
- A Pair of Trowsers } of Osnaburghs,

WOMEN.

- A Cloth Jacket
- A Hat and coarse Handkerchief
- A Petticoat, and
- A Wrapper } of Osnaburghs.

DECEMBER.

MEN.

- A Frock, and
- A Pair of Trowsers } of Osnaburghs.

WOMEN.

WOMEN.

An Osnaburgh Petticoat, and }
 A ditto Wrapper ——— } or
 6 Yards Osnaburghs.

2dly. In considering the second cause of mortality, regard must be had to the description of Negroes imported from Africa, which constitute more than nine in ten of the whole number in the Colony. A considerable part are of middle age, and many even more than that; not inured to labour in the former part of their lives, they suffered the more by the change in their condition in that, as in other instances

When the Island was first settled, these disadvantages operated to a much greater degree than they did afterwards, and still more than they do now, from the progressive change of circumstances favourable to the Negroes. At first, when they were purchased and taken to a settlement, they found few or none of their own country with whom they could converse, to whom they could impart their fears and other feelings, or from whom they could receive information, instruction, or comfort.—In lodging and in food, and often in clothing, their new Masters were deficient themselves, and therefore they could not furnish for their Negroes as they wished to have done.—There being no Houses of Commerce then established in the Island, the Settlers depended on the Merchants in the neighbouring Islands for supplies of necessaries, which were, neither in point of quantity nor of time, adequate to their wants. Such was in general the situation of the White Inhabitants and of their Negroes in Tobago at the commencement of its settlement; and when that is considered, the great mortality which prevailed will not excite

excite wonder. But in process of time, as the situation of both the Whites and Blacks became more comfortable, the sickness and mortality among both decreased; and at this day the situation of the latter is so much improved, that even among those imported from Africa there is not, after a residence of ten or twelve years, more mortality than among Creoles. At present, the Negroes in general, who have either been born, or have resided a few years in the country, are, as was formerly observed, well lodged, well clothed, and well supplied with provisions, especially such as are produced by their own industry, upon which they justly set a higher value than upon those given to them.—All these comforts, particularly the benefits arising from industry, are communicated to the new comers, who, being divided among the old Negroes, are in a manner adopted by them, and become a part of their families.—It must be obvious, that for all purposes of advantage to the Proprietors of Estates, Negroes under the middle age are preferable to such as are older; and as the former will not only become sooner seasoned to the country, and sooner fit for work, but be more easily civilized, and more susceptible of instruction than the latter, it would be eligible to lay a duty on the importation of all Negroes above twenty years of age.

This measure appears to your Committee of the highest importance at this moment, when the Legislatures of the other West India Islands seem determined to attempt the instruction and civilization of the Negroes.—Young Africans may be civilized; but old men and women cannot be expected to forget their country language; and with it they are likely to retain their barbarous customs and habits.

3dly.

3dly. The general practice among the Negroes of travelling by night, more particularly to night assemblies, when they drink to excess, and practise all manner of debauchery, arising from the natural heat of the climate, the stimulus of distilled spirits, and the lewd dances which they practise from evening to morning, and afterwards walk perhaps eight or ten miles to their work.—It is impossible to conceive a practice more calculated than this is to produce sickness, to ruin the constitution, and bring on premature old age in any country, but more particularly in this.—This practice can only be put a stop to by a vigorous co-operation of the Magistrates, Proprietors, and Managers; with the Legislature; but the difficulty of effecting a reform so much calculated to preserve the health and morals of so useful a class of people ought not to deter them from undertaking it.

4thly. The too frequent and liberal use of distilled spirits—that poison so greedily coveted by all savage nations.—In a country like this, where it is so plentiful, it may be difficult, perhaps impossible, to prevent the abuse altogether; but even the mitigation of it merits the serious attention of the Legislature. The Magistrates and Proprietors, perhaps, employing persons in each town and parish, tied by their interest to be vigilant in discovering, and prompt in informing against such persons as sell rum to Negroes, might have a good effect, and who might moreover be bound by an oath to do their duty.

For although the law has laid heavy penalties on the venders of rum to Negroes, and has held out encouragement to informers, yet the evil still continues, for want of informers, as well as from the decrease of population, there not being a sufficient number of White Men in the Colony to superintend the necessary operations, and
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maintain the interior police of the Plantations, much less to act as Magistrates and in other offices necessary for carrying into execution the laws now existing.

5thly. Want of sufficient attention in feeding, clothing, and lodging of lazy indolent Negroes; for such there are on every Plantation, such as ought not to be entrusted with a week's, not even a day's, allowance, nor with the dressing of a single meal for themselves: for such Negroes' food should be prepared and served to them daily, as is done for the sick, and for those imported from Africa until they become capable of taking care of their food, and preparing it themselves. A comfortable house ought also to be erected upon each estate, with a boarded platform, for the accommodation of Negroes of that description. A proper person ought also to be appointed to inspect their clothing daily, to prevent their disposing of it for rum or tobacco, which they would do if not prevented.—Although we are sensible that due attention in this instance is paid by the greater part of all those who are entrusted with the charge of Negroes in this country, yet, for the reasons we have before given, we think that such regulations as those here laid down, modified according to circumstances, ought to be enforced by law; for we are persuaded that a number of Negroes would thereby be saved from falling victims to that formidable scourge called the Mal de Stomac, which has carried off nearly one half of all the grown Negroes which have died in this Island. This disorder is by no means so fatal now as it was formerly, owing, in a great measure, to the Negroes being more capable of dressing their own victuals, more attentive to their clothing and lodging, and to their keeping themselves cleaner.

6thly.

6thly. We cannot but consider the great number of absent Proprietors as a cause of decrease of Slaves in this as in every Island in the West Indies.—We mean not by this to throw any reflections on the Attornies or Managers of the absent Proprietors, by supposing them less actuated by principles of humanity than the Proprietors; but allowing them to be perfectly equal in that respect naturally, yet it must be allowed, at the same time, that there are some considerations peculiar to the Proprietor, which must cast the balance in his favour.—First, the attachment that naturally takes place between the Master and the Slave, from the idea of property.—Again, the Master has the consideration of his own interest in a greater degree than the Attorney or Manager, to aid his humanity, so as to make him more attentive to the wants of his Negro—to his complaints of every kind, and to prompt him to administer to his comfort and happiness in general, as the best means of ensuring his health, which with his own interest is so intimately connected. This principle in our nature does not escape the observations of the Negroes themselves, who, when they plead with fervour, either to obtain an indulgence, or to avoid a punishment, frequently put the emphatic question to the Master, “Am I not your slave?”

Moreover, by the current opinion of the country, more particularly by that of the absent Proprietors, an Attorney or Manager is estimated good or bad, according to the relative proportion between the quantity of the crop and the number of Negroes; but the number of Negroes lost in making the crop, or the number of Creoles reared, are seldom heard of.

To counteract this mischief, a tax ought to be laid on all absent Proprietors, to be reserved as a fund for the

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the encouragement of humanity and care of Negroes, in such a manner as the Legislature shall judge most proper.

The Legislature ought also to adopt such measures as to it shall appear best calculated to bring the health and increase of the Negroes into the fore-ground, instead of the number of hogheads of sugar, or puncheons of rum; so as to make the former the criterion of character and the object of emulation, instead of the latter.

For this purpose we recommend an Act to oblige every person owning or having charge of estates to give in, upon oath, once in every year, an exact list of the Slaves under his charge; to which should be added the names of those who have died, and of those who have been born during the preceding twelve months, which should be certified and sworn to by the Surgeon who attended the estate during that time, who should moreover specify the disorder of which each Negro died.

It would also be useful to have a general return made out from the particular lists, and a certain number of them printed and distributed among the different estates, and transmitted to the absent Proprietors; and a copy transmitted every year to the Agent for the Colony, to be laid before the Secretary of State.

We have now gone through the most prominent causes of the mortality or decrease of the Negroes, and have pointed out the means which in our opinion are best calculated to mitigate or to remove them; and come now to the second head.

THE CAUSES WHICH PREVENT THE PRODUCTION OF
CHILDREN,

1st. The premature, promiscuous, and unrestrained intercourse which takes place between the sexes, which the experience of every country has demonstrated to be destructive of the principle of fecundity in females.—When young Negro women arrive near to the age of puberty in this country, they generally give full scope to the dictates of the carnal appetite, being under no restraint from shame, or from any law human or divine; and a young woman seldom fixes with one man before she has wantoned a few years in libidinous variety, equally destructive of fruitfulness, health, and morals. Here we must observe, the night assemblies we have already mentioned, are a great inducement for young women to remain single; because in that state they can indulge their passions at such meetings without check or controul.

Every Master must be pleased to see his Negroes amuse themselves in innocent mirth, and play upon the Plantation; but promiscuous night assemblies of eight or nine hundred Negroes of all descriptions of character, are rather to be considered as seminaries of vice and debauchery, than places of innocent amusement.—We therefore again recommend that immediate and vigorous steps should be taken for the suppression of this nursery, in which mischiefs of various kinds take their rise.

We must confess, however, that serious and alarming as this evil is, the only means by which a remedy could be applied effectually, would be attended with very great difficulties.

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The occasion or pretext of night-meetings of Negroes, never confined to the Plantations where they are held, but resorted to by Negroes from different Plantations, sometimes at a distance of several miles, is the performance of Funeral Rites.—This being a privilege which they have enjoyed since the first settlement of the Colony, and a privilege to gratify the senses in the enjoyment of pleasure, the privation of it would be severely felt as an injury, and considered as injustice, unless compensation were made by granting another privilege, that might, in their own minds, be deemed equivalent to what they had lost. To put an end to a ceremony which they certainly do consider as an act of devotion towards the dead, would be cruel, and therefore ought not to be attempted.—To restrain the Negroes in the excesses of all kinds which they commit upon these occasions, would, we apprehend, be impracticable; but by allowing the ceremony to take place in the day-time, in place of the night, the bad effects would be not only less extensive, but much less injurious to the Negroes to whom the indulgence would be given. Those from the neighbouring Plantations, being employed under the eye of their Masters, could not join; and supposing, what indeed would always happen, that excesses in drinking were committed, yet the advantage of a night's rest would immediately follow, and the Negroes might return to their work next morning without injury.

2dly. The common custom among the Negro Women of keeping their children from two to three years at the breast (often longer).—Although many Proprietors are convinced of the influence of this custom in preventing the increase of children, yet the women are so attached to it, that individuals find it impracticable, without direct

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force, to abolish it. But were a law passed to limit the time of suckling, unless in particular cases of sickness or uncommon weakness, to be judged of by the Surgeon who attends the estate, the custom might be easily abolished.

THE CAUSES WHICH IMPEDE THE REARING OF CHILDREN.

1st. The Tetanus, or Locked Jaw, which generally seizes the child about the sixth or seventh day after the birth.—This in some years has been observed to be more prevalent than in others, and still more so upon particular estates. We have known estates for years successively lose almost every child born; and the same estates, with the same midwife, and the same treatment in every respect, for an equal length of time, not lose a single child by that disorder: from which it is probable, that this disorder is to be considered as endemic of particular seasons, of particular places, at particular times, and perhaps more or less so of all new-settled Colonies in this part of the world. Such has been its severity in this Colony, as to have carried off, in some years, about one third part of the children born.

This disorder, however, within these few years past, like some others to which the Island was subject, has, as the country advanced in cultivation, become less frequent.

2dly. The great proportion of African women in this Island, which experience tells us are not so successful in rearing their children as the Creoles, who have relations and connections upon the estates to assist and instruct them in rearing their offspring.

3dly.

3dly. The frequent separation of man and wife when they have young children.—In these cases the children always suffer, as no care of a Proprietor or Manager can make up for the loss of the joint care of parents. A marriage ceremony, and some ceremony also when a separation is absolutely necessary, might render such separations less frequent. Premiums for permanent attachments, even punishment for separation without just cause, would also be very salutary in promoting the one, and preventing the other, and would not a little tend to the increase of population.

Further, with a view of facilitating this desirable object, the rearing of Creoles, your Committee recommend a law to prevent young children being carried to the field with their mothers, which is too general a practice; and to oblige every estate to keep a Nursery, or proper house for the reception of young children during the hours of field labour, with nurses, and a sufficient quantity of food, suitable to the age of the children. The nurses ought to be such as the women, whose children they are to take care of, have the greatest confidence in for care and humanity; and every complaint made by the mothers, of neglect or ill-treatment of the children on the part of the nurses, ought to be strictly attended to, as we consider every encouragement given to the maternal affection as a step towards civilization. The children should continue in this Nursery until such time as they can be useful to their parents—they are several years before they are serviceable to their Masters. The advantages which those who have adopted this regulation have derived from it, afford a well-grounded hope that the most beneficial effects would be produced by the general adoption of it.

But of all the means of promoting population among the Negroes, and at the same time of attaching them to the estates, and (if we may use the expression) of naturalizing them to the country, none, in our opinion, seem so well adapted to the end as those which tend to instil into them habits of industry, and to inspire them with a desire of property; for when once obtained, it is held sacred, and we have no instance of a Negro being deprived of his property by his Master, or prevented from bequeathing it at his death to such of his relations or friends as he thinks proper.

To produce the first, it is necessary to convince the Slave that his own labour and industry are capable of drawing from the soil sufficient subsistence for himself and family.—To produce the second, it is no less necessary to impress his mind with a conviction of the security of his property.—To convince him of the first, a sufficient quantity of good land ought to be given to the Negro, and a sufficient portion of time secured to him by law to cultivate it.

It must not however be inferred, from the various regulations which we have recommended for the encouragement of industry among the Negroes, either that the generality of them are wanting in disposition, or in the means of providing amply for their sustenance in that respect; nor is it our intention to convey an idea that due encouragement to industry is not held out by the resident Proprietors or Managers of estates in this Colony. The contrary is the fact, excepting some, but not many, instances, throughout the Island. All that we propose by enumerating the different means by which industry may be promoted and productive of its end, is to render universal

veral advantages, which we allow to be generally possessed by the Negroes in this Island.

QUERY II.

WHAT has been, during the last ten years, the annual importation of Slaves into this Island?—How many of them have been re-exported? (to which list ought to be added the number transported off the Island under judicial sentences, the number executed for crimes, and the number of those who have been stolen, pirated, or kidnapped). What has been, on a comparison of births and deaths, the annual difference between them?—What proportion of the number imported have been wanted for the supply of the estates actually settled,—and what for the annual increase of cultivation, as far as the same can be ascertained?

ANSWER.

No documents are to be found of the number of Negroes in the Colony during the time that the French held the Island, it being probable that all such documents were destroyed by the fire that happened in the town of Scarborough in the year 1790.—On the 1st day of July, 1795, by a return in the Treasurer's office, it appears that the number of Negroes then in the Island was 15,460; and on the 1st of August, 1797, by another return in the same office, that the number was then 16,190: no return has yet been made for 1798.—It further appears, from a certificate of the Collector of the Customs, that from 1st July, 1795, to 1st July, 1797, 1533 Negroes were imported; and from a certificate of the Provost Marshal, five were transported for crimes, and three hanged for murder during that time.—It also appears, that of the

Corps of Pioneer Negroes, raised in October, 1795, for the service of Government, and sent to Martinique, eighty never returned; and further, that of the Corps of Negroes raised for the service of the Colony, one died on the expedition against Porto Rico.

From which it appears, that the natural decrease for these two years was 714 Negroes, that is, 357 per annum, which is nearly $2\frac{1}{5}$ per cent. The account will stand as follows:—

Number of Negroes imported into Tobago		
from 1st July, 1795, to 1st August, 1797	1,563	
Number exported	-----	30

		1,533
Deduct ditto transported during that time		5
Ditto executed for murder	----	3
Number of Pioneer Negroes not returned		80
One Negro of the Jager Corps dead at		
Porto Rico	-----	1

		89

	Increase by importation	1,444
Increase of Negroes by the two Returns in Treasurers's office	-----	730

Remains deficiency or decrease in two years		714

As there are not above two or three estates in the Island fully stocked with Negroes, we may conclude that the whole of the Negroes which have been imported, have been wanted for the increase of cultivation.

SUGGESTION III.

As the dissolute manners of the Negroes have been given in evidence, as a principal cause of their deficient population, it would be essential to ascertain whether the Legislature of the Island cannot hold out some encouragement to marriage, which may tend to counteract that disposition which leads the young women to prostitution; such as directing that the first establishment of married Negroes to a certain extent, to be specified, shall be made at the expence of the Master, and bestowing some mark of distinction or favour, such as difference of dress; and some pecuniary annual reward on such parents as shall have reared a child (and those rewards to increase with the number of children): and whether it may not be advantageous to hold out rewards and encouragements to such midwives as shall have been particularly successful in bringing children into the world, and in treating and directing the treatment of them for the first fortnight after their birth? Should not pregnant women be exempted from field labour during a certain period, say the last six weeks or two months of their pregnancy, and from all labour, excepting taking care of their children, for the same time after delivery? To multiply and rear the human species, there must be a marriage, or something to that effect: a contract of this kind is actually necessary. At the time of delivery the mother can only take care of the child, and requires the aid and assistance of the father to take care of herself.

ANSWER.

IN addition to the suppression of these nurseries of vice and debauchery, night assemblies, and preventing the

Negroes from travelling by night, we think it may be useful to hold out some encouragement to matrimony among the Negroes; such as the erection of a comfortable house at the Master's expence for a young woman upon her marriage, provided the husband has not such a house already. Goats, hogs, or stock of some kind, to the value of say sixteen or twenty dollars, might also be given her. The married woman might also be clothed with Check instead of Osnaburghs.

We believe the custom to be pretty general of Masters giving presents to young children at Christmas, and also to midwives who have been successful in rearing children; but in order to render it still more general, a law might be passed to entitle the midwife to receive one dollar from the Proprietor of every child he shall bring into the world, as soon as the child is one month old, and to oblige the Proprietor, or person acting for him, to pay one dollar at Christmas to the mother of every child born on the estate (and living) since the preceding Christmas, reserving further rewards and premiums to the discretion of the Proprietor, Attorney, or person having the charge of the Plantation. Pregnant women in this country have particular indulgences; and we believe there are few or no instances of women, after it is known they are with child, being continued in a gang that may occasionally be employed in laborious work. On large estates, the pregnant women, and the women who have young children, generally form a gang of themselves, and do not work above six or seven hours in the day in the best weather. Their work is lighter, and their indulgence, in respect to time of working, is increased as they advance in pregnancy; but total inactivity, experience has taught us, is equally prejudicial to mother and child: the first
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generally swells in the lower extremities, and the latter comes into the world in a sickly state.—After delivery, the midwife and another woman, who is generally one of the lying-in woman's own chusing, continue with her during the first fortnight. On some estates the custom is to allow four, on others five, and on others six weeks to lying-in women. We are of opinion that the time ought to be fixed by law, and that five weeks is a proper time; but no lying-in woman should be dismissed, even at that time, without the advice of the Surgeon who attends the estate, who ought to give a certificate under his hand, that the mother and child are in a condition to be dismissed.

Every Plantation ought to have a proper house for the reception of lying-in women; but when the woman has a comfortable house, and has friends and connections upon the estate, she ought to be indulged with lying-in in the house to which she has been accustomed. This is always more agreeable to the woman, as well as to the husband; because she can, even in the state in which she is, act as a guardian over their stock, to see it fed and taken care of.

SUGGESTION IV.

WHETHER it would not be for the interest of the Planter, as well as for that of the Negroes, that the mother of five or six children should be exempted from all labour whatever, excepting that of attending to her family; and whether some legislative provision could not be made, whereby the assessment of certain taxes now paid, might be proportionably increased, where they fall on unmarried Negroes only? Such a provision would hold forth a still further encouragement to Proprietors of estates, by promoting the increase of their Negroes by marriage.

marriage. And whether such provision may not be still further extended, by exempting all Negro children from any taxes they are at present liable to, until they are of age to labour; and by progressively increasing the amount of such taxes, in proportion to the increasing difference between the number of Negroes and the number of children on any estate?

ANSWER.

It has been already said that the time allowed to women after lying-in is from four to six weeks, and the general practice in this country is to allow to all Negroes on every estate half a day in every week for the cultivation of their grounds, unless while they are employed in taking off the crops, when the dryness of the weather renders cultivation ineffectual. This we conceive to be a sufficient allowance of time for the encouragement of industry in the one case, and for the health of women after delivery, and that of the children, in the other case. But with a view further to encourage and promote the breeding and rearing of children, it might be adviseable to grant total exemption from labour to all mothers of six children and upwards, six of which being alive.

And further, with a view to encourage the rearing of Creoles, when by the returns it shall appear that there has been a natural increase of Negroes on any Plantation for the preceding twelve months, the person having the charge of such Plantation during that time, should be entitled to receive from the public treasury the sum of ten pounds for every surplus Negro; and the six persons having immediate charge of Plantations, who shall appear to have the greatest natural increase for the preceding
twelve

twelve months, should be entitled to receive from the public treasury premiums according to the following rates:—

For the highest number	100	} Pounds sterling.
the second — — —	90	
the third — — —	80	
the fourth — — —	70	
the fifth — — —	60	
And the sixth — — —	50	

SUGGESTION V.

WHETHER, in consequence of the Act passed last Session, whereby the laws are repealed which made Negroes chattels for the payment of debts, the Legislature of the Island would be disposed to secure the Negroes on a Plantation from being liable to be seized for any future debts of their Masters, contracted after passing a law for that purpose; and to substitute in favour of the Creditor, some other security equally summary and efficacious? Would not such a law, its effects being merely prospective, be beneficial to the Creditor, the Debtor, and the Negroes? And whether also, if the Legislature was by its authority unalienably to attach the Plantation Negroes to the soil, thereby putting them as nearly as possible in a state of villanage, or as *adscripti glebæ*, a species of tenure that still exists in many parts of Europe, so that it might not be lawful to remove them, except by their own consent, such a measure would not tend essentially to the happiness and welfare of the Negro?

ANSWER.

MONEY has generally been borrowed by the Planters in this Island upon mortgage; and, by a law of the Colony,

lony, in these cases, the land and Slaves can never be separated.

Whenever Negroes have been removed from one Plantation to another, it has been an invariable rule that families shall on no account be separated; that every convenience they enjoyed in their former situation should be made at least equal in their new establishment; in consequence of which, seldom any repugnance is shewn by them to a change of habitation, unless perhaps that their new place of abode is farther removed from the market town than their former one:—and were any law to be passed, preventing the removal of Negroes from one estate to another, it would be a hindrance to the settlement of any new Plantations in the Colony, which never could be carried on without a certain proportion of seasoned Negroes along with the new ones which might be purchased.

SUGGESTION VI.

As the instruction of Negroes is of the utmost consequence, it would be important to know whether the Legislature of the Island has in view any particular modes of effecting this purpose; and what species or degree of encouragement it would be disposed to hold out to such Missionaries as might be found properly qualified for that purpose, and who would undertake that duty,—either by enacting that such Missionaries should procure, in favour of the estate where they are employed, certain privileged immunities and advantages, or in what other manner their services should be rewarded by the Island? This would lead to the general establishment of the Christian Religion among the Negroes, it would better establish marriages, it would restrain promiscuous intercourse, and impress their
minds,

minds, in a simple yet forcible manner, with the great truths of morality.

ANSWER.

FOR the reasons set forth in the answer to the first of these Suggestions, the Legislature has not deliberated upon this subject. We are of opinion, however, that immediate measures ought to be adopted by the Legislature, to endeavour to instil into the minds of the Negroes the principles of religion and morality: for although some attempts have been made towards the accomplishment of so desirable an object in this Island without success, yet we are persuaded that the failure proceeded rather from the feeble manner of making the attempt, than from the impracticability of the measure. Former attempts were only the efforts of one or two individuals, unsupported by law; but were a general and serious effort to be made by the Planters at large, supported by law, we cannot doubt of its success.

We therefore recommend immediate measures being taken to provide for such a number of Missionaries as the Legislature may judge necessary for that purpose. These we think ought to be men rather conspicuous for piety and their exemplary manner of life, than for learning; and with that view we beg leave to recommend Missionaries from the Society for propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts. But as example has a much better effect than precept, the White Inhabitants ought, by regular attendance at the places of public worship, to set the example of piety and devotion to the Negroes.

SUGGESTION VII.

As the instruction of the Negroes is a principal measure towards the attainment of the great object proposed
in

in these Suggestions, and as the docility of young Negroes will render it much more easy to instruct them than those more advanced in years, would it not be of great advantage to the Island to lay such a tax on the importation of all Negroes above twenty or twenty-five years of age, as would not fail to operate as a premium on the importation of those under that age (such an act has just passed in Jamaica): or, if it was thought proper, a premium might be granted on the importation of Negroes under the above-mentioned age, at the same time a tax was laid on the importation of those who exceeded it?

ANSWER.

WE are of opinion that a tax should be laid on all Negroes imported above twenty-five years of age, and that a premium should be paid on all female Negroes imported between the ages of eight and twenty.

SUGGESTION VIII.

WHETHER it would not be important that Vestry Courts should be established for the protection of Slaves, by an Act of the Legislature, similar to that which has been passed in Grenada, whereby persons of character and property in the several parishes are appointed as inspectors, or visitors, to superintend and enforce all the regulations enacted in favour of the Negroes?

ANSWER.

WE are of opinion that an appointment of two or three Guardians of the Rights of Negroes in every parish would answer the end in view better than Vestry Courts. Such Guardians ought to be men of the first property and character in the parish, and should be invested with full
power

power and authority to see every law relative to the Negroes put in execution; and not only empowered, but enjoined by an oath, to perform that duty. They ought to take cognizance of all complaints of ill-treatment made to them by the Negroes in the parish, and to have authority to order such Negro or Negroes before them as they may judge necessary for the elucidation of the subject of complaint; and also to summon such White Men as they may judge necessary, and them to examine upon oath relative to the subject of complaint before them; to redress the real grievances of the Negroes, or to order such punishments to be inflicted on Negroes making groundless complaints of ill-treatment by their Masters as they shall think proper, so far as the law shall authorize them so to do.

The Guardians ought also to visit every estate in the parish once every six months, to inspect the lodgings of the Negroes, the hospitals, nurseries, and provision-grounds, and to see that the laws respecting feeding, clothing, &c. of the Negroes, are put in execution.

A variety of other regulations have occurred to your Committee, all tending towards the melioration of the state of the Negroes; but as they do not seem immediately connected with any of the foregoing Queries and Suggestions, we reserve the detail of them for the consideration of the Committee that probably will be appointed to prepare a Bill for that purpose.

I DO

(113²)

I DO hereby certify that the above is a true Copy of a Report made to the Assembly of Tobago by three of its Members, who, with two Members of Council, were appointed a joint Committee of both Houses, to take into consideration a Resolution of the House of Commons of the 6th April, 1797, and a Series of Suggestions and Queries received from his Excellency the Governor, and dated Whitehall, the 23^d of April last, relative to the Increase of Negroes, and the Melioration of their State, as the same was, after mature deliberation, altered, examined, and amended by this House.

GILBERT PETRIE, *Speaker.*

Tobago, 2d October, 1798.

Wm Nelson

R E P O R T

OF THE

COMMITTEE

OF

COUNCIL AND ASSEMBLY,

OF THE

ISLAND OF TOBAGO,

ON THE

INCREASE OF POPULATION,

AND THE

Melioration of the State of the Slaves,

AS AMENDED AND APPROVED BY

THE COLONIAL ASSEMBLY.

LONDON:
PRINTED AT THE
Minerva Press,
LEADENHALL-STREET.

1799.

*EXTRACT from the Minutes of the Assembly of Tobago,
dated the 12th November, 1798.*

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY,

THAT the Speaker do transmit to the Agent for the Colony, Copies in duplicate of a Report of the Committee of both Houses of Legislature appointed to take into consideration the Resolutions of the House of Commons of 6th April, 1797, and other Papers relative to the Increase of Negroes and the Melioration of their State, as the same has been amended and approved by this House, with directions to communicate the said Report to such Proprietors of Estates and other Persons interested in this Colony as may be resident in Great Britain.

(A true Copy)

GILBERT PETRIE,

S P E A K E R.

JAMES STEWARD,

Deputy Clerk of the Assembly.