

NOTES

9 (8)

ON

THE PRESENT CONDITION

OF

THE NEGROES

IN

Jamaica.

By H. T. DE LA BECHE, Esq.

F. R. S., &c.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

1825.

NOTES,

&c.

THE subject of negro slavery has been so fully discussed, that little perhaps remains to be said, at least so far as the merits of the general question are concerned. Ample, however, as the discussion has been, it has appeared to me, that, with respect to the actual state of slavery in our colonies, many minute and interesting details might still be given. To supply such information as a proprietor is most likely to have the means of obtaining, the following facts are offered as having come under my own personal observation while in the island of Jamaica:— in doing so it is not my intention to enter the field of controversy, but to state fairly and candidly what I have myself witnessed. The addition of any new fact cannot be without its value to those who are anxious to form an impartial judgment on a subject, in which such great public and private interests are involved, independent of the higher considerations of humanity and justice.

In offering these observations, however, I am too

well aware of the bitter feelings and the prejudices that this question has given rise to, not to know, that if as a West Indian proprietor, I have had opportunities of information I was not likely otherwise to possess, there are those who will not hesitate to use this very circumstance as a ground for impeaching the validity of my statements, and perhaps even of throwing suspicion on my motives: I give to such persons the full benefit of their liberal opinions, but I trust there are also others who will not think it an inevitable condition of the possession of colonial property, that the owner must be a lover of slavery, or an enemy to truth. By such I would hope to be judged by a fairer standard, and trust they will decide on the accuracy of the following statements by their general character, rather than by any reference to the peculiar circumstances of the writer.

I entered on this investigation with a sincere desire to ascertain facts, and with no other prepossession than the dislike of slavery natural to every Englishman, and which I trust the accidental circumstance of inheriting West Indian property does not necessarily obliterate: I can truly say with Bryan Edwards, "that I am no friend to slavery in any shape, or under any modification;" but the question in this case is not whether slavery in itself be the object of our love or hate, but how the existing state of things in our West India colonies can be changed with justice and safety to all the parties interested. That this state does exist, cannot, without great injustice,

be made matter of exclusive reproach to the colonists. Whatever odium attaches to it must be shared in common with the whole British nation; for by the English government and legislature was the traffic in slaves fostered and encouraged: by them was it avowedly considered as a national object; and the interests of the colonists themselves were, as related to it, at all times held subordinate to those of the mother country.

I shall now proceed to state what I observed respecting the present condition of the negroes in Jamaica, during my residence there from the 20th of December, 1823, to the 28th of December, 1824. I have been on and passed through estates at all times of the day, and in various parts of the country. Before, however, I make any observations on general management, it may be better, in the first place, to present an account of that pursued on my own property, and then state wherein it differs from what I have remarked on others.

There were, when I left it, two hundred and seven negroes (96 males and 111 females) upon my estate of Halse Hall, in the parish of Clarendon, of whom ten only are Africans, the remainder Creoles, and, with one or two exceptions, born on the property, which was founded in the time of Charles the Second; there has been a decrease of negroes until the year ending in March, 1824, when the numbers were the same at the beginning and end; there is every reason to expect an increase for the current year.

The occupations of the day commence early in the morning, by the head driver* ringing a hand-bell in the negro village to rouse the people.

From the beginning of March to the end of September the negroes are summoned to their labour at five o'clock in the morning, with the exception of those women who have young children, either at the breast, or lately weaned; these persons are not expected to make their appearance for an hour or two afterwards. During the other months of the year the negroes are not at work until half past five or six, according to the hour at which daylight appears, as they are not called upon to perform any description of work but in daylight, excepting in crop time, as will be hereafter explained.

About nine o'clock, the driver, by a signal with his whistle, draws them off to their breakfast, which has been prepared and brought to the field by cooks appointed for that purpose. The time allowed by law for this meal is half an hour, which may be, and frequently is, increased to three quarters, at the discretion of our head driver, who takes his breakfast at the same time. He recalls them to their work by a second signal with his whistle.

At half past twelve, a conch shell is sounded by order of the overseer in front of his house, as a signal for all the negroes on the property to take their din-

* I here and elsewhere make use of the name common to the principal black men on Jamaica properties, though, with many others, I could wish the substitution of some better term.

ner-time; but as dinner is a meal seldom taken by the negroes, who from choice defer their principal repast till the evening, the more industrious part of them generally devote the two hours, allowed them by law at this time, to the cultivation of their provision grounds, a large proportion of which is, in this estate, within five minutes' walk from their houses. At this time the children of the different families are sent by their parents to pick the various plants known under the general term of hog-meat: with these they feed their pigs and breeding sows.

At two, p. m. the conch shell is again sounded by order of the overseer, to warn the negroes at their private occupations; and at half past two the people are expected to be at their respective works, where they remain until half an hour after sunset, which varies, according to the season of the year, from half past five to half past six; they then retire to their homes, and spend the evening as they think proper.

The women, who have children at the breast, carry them to the field, and choose some cool, shady place in which to place them, when one half of the mothers go to work, and the other remains to attend the children, relieving each other alternately.

The drivers on Halse Hall are not permitted to carry whips, neither are they allowed to punish of their own authority; if there be any cause of complaint against a negro, the case is reported to the overseer, who examines into the matter, and by *his order only can punishment be inflicted.*

The principal occupations of the head driver consist in attending and directing the labours of the great gang, as it is termed, and in receiving from the overseer, every night, his orders for the work to be done next day by the different classes of field labourers and tradesmen, which orders he communicates to the people at their own houses; he attends the serving of all allowances of herrings, corn, rum, sugar, &c., to the negroes, in order to see justice done by the book-keepers to all parties. The head driver on my estate is an intelligent, humane, and steady man, in whom we place great confidence, which we have never known abused.

The great gang, as the first class of negroes is denominated, consists of the strong, able, and effective people only. The laborious part of the work on the estate is consequently performed by them, and consists in digging cane holes, guinea-corn holes, falling wood land, and, in crop time cutting canes, &c. Each person is expected to open about an hundred holes* per day, when employed in that work; this the negroes can do with great ease to themselves in our soil; but should they fall short in their work, the only punishment inflicted is by stopping the defaulter's share of the extra daily allowance of rum and sugar, given them whilst thus employed: the extra allowance consists of one quart of rum for every ten

* A cane-hole is nothing more than a certain portion of a long furrow or trench; and as we use the plough as much as we can, the negroes do little more than clean out the furrow made by it.

persons, and of one quart of sugar for every six, and is sent to the driver every morning for distribution during the time of cane-hole digging; very frequently, as a further encouragement to the negroes, the same is given them in the evening.

The second gang consists of weakly adults, and young people from ten to seventeen years of age; they perform all the light work, such as weeding and moulding the canes, &c. In crop time they tie canes in the field, drive cattle in the mill-house, and supply the boiling-house fires with light dry trash from the trash house.

The small gang is formed of children from six to nine years of age, whose only work is to carry grass to the stable, and pick green slips and vines for the hogs, under the charge of a careful old woman.

During crop time, which generally lasts about four months, the negroes are, in consequence of being but comparatively few on this estate, divided into two spells, which relieve each other every twelve hours, viz. at noon and midnight, thus allowing half the night for work, and half for rest during five days in the week; the whole of the remaining two nights, those of Saturday and Sunday, being their own by law. The drivers, most of the domestics, with the wain-men, which latter persons are frequently employed with their wains or carts until late in the evening, do not keep spell.

Crop time, though additional labour is then re-

quired, viz. that of the night, is a merry time with the negroes, perhaps the merriest, with the exception of Christmas; if the canes then give them additional trouble, they amply compensate themselves, for they eat as many as they please, drink as much hot and cold cane-juice as they think proper, not clandestinely, but as a customary privilege; and in spite of all our vigilance, carry off a considerable quantity of sugar for themselves, and of canes for their hogs. The average loss of produce to the proprietor, in consequence of these practices, is generally estimated at one-tenth, and this calculation certainly appears to be within the truth.

As to food: ninety barrels of herrings are imported every year for the use of the negroes. These herrings are served out weekly to them in the following proportions, viz. the head driver receives eighteen, sixteen head people, nine each; all grown up persons, six each; children of a certain age, five each; and all young children, four each.

It required one thousand bushels of guinea corn to supply the negroes during the year, which, if purchased, would cost 666*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* currency, at 13*s.* 4*d.* per bushel. The average crop of guinea corn on the estate is about sixteen hundred bushels, so that nearly two-thirds of the labour expended in this kind of cultivation was solely for their own benefit. It used to be the custom to give every negro on the property a gallon of guinea corn on the Sunday morning, when they had not been allowed the previous

Saturday for themselves ; but in consequence of having had every Saturday given them (out of crop) during the last year, they have not asked, and consequently have not received, any very great assistance from the corn store. About sixty persons, consisting of invalids, children, the stock keepers, and domestics, receive a gallon of corn each per week all the year round.

The best guinea corn land on the estate was, at the request of the negroes, given up to them about three years since, for the purpose of making additional provision grounds. This land, which is within five minutes walk of their houses, affords them, in tolerable seasons, an immense return of maize, sugar-beans, sweet potatoes, and cassada ; independent of these grounds, they have a large run of land behind their houses of several hundred acres, where every one may, and does, cultivate as much as he thinks proper : they have also a very fine plantain walk, the returns from which are great ; to this walk additional provision grounds are attached. The lowlands, in which the estate is situated, being subject to occasional drought, the negroes have lately been encouraged to cultivate provision grounds in a tract of twelve hundred acres of mountain land belonging to Halse Hall, where the seasons are regular, and the soil excellent. To enable the people to cultivate this land with ease to themselves, it being situated in the Mocho mountains, about ten miles from the estate's works, they have every Saturday (out of crop) allowed

them, and every alternate Saturday they are lent a wain, or cart, and six oxen, to carry up their tools, plants, &c. with four breakers of water, containing forty gallons, to prevent them from losing their time in searching for and carrying that necessary, water being scarce in the Mocho mountains. When their provision grounds begin to produce in any quantity, the negroes are to receive every assistance with mules, &c. for the purpose of either bringing their provisions home, or conveying them to neighbouring markets* as they may think proper.

The head driver receives every week, two quarts of rum and two quarts of sugar; the sixteen other head people have, once a week during the crop, and once a fortnight during the rest of the year, each one quart of rum and one quart of sugar. Every woman with a child at the breast receives weekly four quarts of guinea corn, one quart of sugar, and one quart of oatmeal, or wheaten flour.

They raise great numbers of hogs, goats, and poultry, which they generally sell or exchange for their favourite salted food, such as salt beef, pork, cod, or ling. Their meals principally consist of a thick soup, or pot, as they term it, composed of peas, beans, caliloo (a vegetable much resembling spinach), yams, cocos, and sweet potatoes, boiled up with

* For the prices which the negroes obtain in our neighbourhood, for the different articles they carry to market, see Appendix A. This list has been selected as a tolerably fair estimate of country prices, there being no town in our immediate neighbourhood.

some of the above salt provisions; the whole being highly seasoned with capsicums and pimento.* This composition they prefer to any dish prepared according to the rules of European cookery.

On Easter Monday every negro receives a quart of rum, and a quart of sugar; and on Christmas Eve eight pounds weight of salt-fish (either cod or ling), one quart of sugar, and one of rum.†

From their various provision grounds and allowances the people not only obtain a sufficiency for themselves, but a large overplus, which they carry to market, and convert into money.

With respect to clothing: the negroes receive the following articles once a year:—

CLASS.	Yards of Oznaburgh.	Yards of Blue Baize.	Yards of Long Ells.
The head driver	20	8	0
The 1st class, or head people	16	6	0
The 2nd class, or men	11	4	0
The 3rd class, or women	11	4	5
The 4th class, or children	6	3	0

Every negro, whether old or young, receives annually a black hat, a Kilmarnock cap, a handkerchief, a knife, some tape, nine skeins of thread, and some needles.

In addition to this, the head driver receives annu-

* I think I have seen it observed that the negroes do not use pimento in their food: it is however by no means uncommon in the cookery of my people.

† In addition to the above Christmas allowance, we kill an ox at that season, which is distributed among the negroes.

ally a blue broad cloth jacket and two check shirts; every other head person one check shirt. The domestics, both male and female, receive allowances of check. Every woman with a young child gets an additional present of eight yards of Oznaburgh, and three yards and a half of check.

This allowance of clothing is rather more than sufficient to supply them with *working dresses* during the year, for Sundays and holidays they have dresses purchased by themselves of a very superior description, often exceeding in value those possessed by the generality of European peasantry. They very frequently have coral necklaces, gold rings, broaches, &c. in addition to the common bead necklaces, that scarcely a woman or girl is without.

Every family is supplied with an iron pot for their kitchens, varying in size according to the number of persons, once in two or three years, as wanted.

As soon as a woman is reported to be pregnant, she is taken into the second gang, and ordered to remain there until her seventh month, when she is allowed to remain at home, until six weeks after her confinement; whilst, with the second gang, she is not compelled to do even the light work of that gang, the intention being merely to keep her in sight, and prevent her from carrying heavy loads for herself, which she would most probably do, if permitted to ramble over the neighbourhood,

The children are seldom weaned until sixteen or eighteen months old, unless the pregnancy of the

mother may make it desirable to do so sooner; when a child is to be weaned, it is given in charge to a careful old woman, who collects all the young children in the morning at day-light, attends them during the day, prepares their food for them, and restores them to their parents when they return from their work. The children remain under the charge of the weaning nurse until they are six years old, when they are taken into the second, or grass gang.

The negroes are allowed one holiday at Easter, and three at Christmas. My people have every Saturday during eight months of the year, amounting to thirty-four days, which, with the four holidays above mentioned, and the Sundays throughout the year, amount to ninety days, or very nearly a quarter of the year, that they have exclusively to themselves.

The hospital, which is regularly attended by a white medical man, is amply supplied with medicines and other necessaries; to be admitted, a negro has only to apply; when his case is inquired into. Very frequently applications are made by persons who have no complaint whatever, but whose object is to avoid work; to check this practice, and prevent the risk of turning away those really sick, we keep in the people who are suspected of playing tricks during the Saturday and Sunday (their own days); this plan has had the desired effect. A negro who is sick, or labours under any bodily infirmity, receives a supply of sugar, rum, oatmeal, flour, and

wine,* as often as he may require it, with animal food from the overseer's table.

With respect to their houses, much depends on their own industry; they are generally comfortable in the interior, and are commonly formed of timber uprights driven into the ground, and wattled together, the whole being covered with plaster; the entrances are low, and the roof high and thatched. The thatch palm is commonly used by my people. The poorest habitations consist of a hall and bedroom, separated from each other, with a detached kitchen and a pig-sty; the cottages of the industrious negroes and head people have more rooms, the yard is generally fenced in, and contains detached kitchens, hog-sties, fowl, and pigeon-houses.

The furniture of their houses, of course, depends upon their means; the industrious negroes and head people have, besides chairs and tables, a cupboard or sideboard, with crockery and glass, and other articles. I have seen some of their beds composed of good mattresses, upon a four post bedstead, and hung with mosquito nets: this however is not the lot of the many, whose beds are generally formed of soft mats or common mattresses, raised a foot or two above the ground, upon a kind of frame work. Most of their habitations contain comforts, for which a

* A certain quantity of port wine is annually imported for this purpose, and should a sick negro require it, malt liquor is purchased for him in the country.

person, judging only from the exterior of their houses would give them little credit.

There are five negroes on the property marked with a brand mark; two of these were so marked about eighteen years ago, and three, I am sorry to say, in 1822 or 1823; they were, it is true, bad characters, but nothing can, in my opinion, excuse such an abominable practice.*

Every Thursday fortnight, a Wesleyan missionary (the Rev. I. Crofts) affords religious and moral instruction to my people, who assemble for that purpose in one of our large buildings (the boiling house), which is capable of conveniently containing more persons than there are on the property. In order to make the time suitable to all parties, the instruction takes place in the evening, the negroes receiving their two hours for dinner-time at half past four, instead of the middle of the day: this arrangement is made with the consent of the people; for, strange as it may appear to some persons, the consent of negroes is sometimes asked. The children are separately catechised, as are also such adults as prefer that mode of instruction; for we are particularly careful to avoid an appearance of compulsion, and in consequence there is generally a full

* It was wished to punish the overseer, who had caused the three negroes to be branded; but as the operation had been performed by heating the small silver brand in burning spirit, and had been applied only for an instant to the back, it was by no means certain that we could do so.

attendance, (from 150 to 180). The people are always neat and clean on these occasions, the women mostly in white dresses. I was much pleased with the trouble the mothers took about the appearance of their children; they were most frequently dressed in white, with white handkerchiefs about their heads. Many of the negro children displayed considerable quickness in their answers to the Missionary's questions, and three or four of the girls were very remarkable for their memories.

Punishments.—The whip, as I have before observed, is not (on my estate) allowed to be carried in the field, and punishment can only be inflicted by order of the overseer, on the report of the book-keepers or drivers; thus opportunity is afforded for considering those offences that have not occurred under his eye, with proper calmness and deliberation, and the chance in some measure avoided, of inflicting chastisement under the influence of sudden passion, which might be the case, if the right of punishment were permitted to be exercised by those who superintend the negroes in the field. Our usual punishments are, stoppage of extra allowances, confinement in the stocks, and switching; the whip being used only in very bad cases, and upon the men; for, as far as respects the women, I have abolished it altogether.

Our negroes have been quite as orderly, if not more so, since the carrying of the driver's whip has been discontinued, as before; and our work is as

well done, notwithstanding I was gravely warned that such innovations would cause every species of insubordination,

The overseer keeps a punishment-book, a copy of which for the month is to be regularly forwarded to me, in which the offences and punishments are entered, as follows:

Date.	Name.	Offence.	Punishment.	Remarks.
1824. Nov. 10.	Wm. Smith.	In a drunken fit, struck at and wounded Eleanor with an iron bar.	Confinement in the stocks.	Was let out the second day, in consequence of his promises of better conduct.

I shall now proceed to state the general management of Jamaica properties.

A decrease of negroes is very common among them, arising from various circumstances; ill-treatment has been assigned by one party as the principal, if not only cause: this, although it may be admitted as founded in truth in some instances, is by no means generally a correct statement. No doubt much may, and does depend upon the management of the negroes, but very much also depends upon themselves: their African ideas lead them to prefer polygamy and promiscuous intercourse to marriage, as it exists in Christian countries; indeed, so adverse were my own people, particularly the women, to it, that I could not prevail upon a single pair to marry,

during my residence among them, though constantly striving to overcome their prejudices ; nor do I expect that this object will be accomplished, until they have imbibed proper moral and religious feelings on the subject from the instructions of the Wesleyan Missionary. Another cause of decrease is the practice too many of the young women have, of procuring abortions in the early stages of pregnancy, from their dread that child-bearing will interfere with the pursuit of their favourite amusements, and their dislike of the restraint that it necessarily imposes on them. This used to be very much the practice on my property ; but it is hoped that the rewards we now give, in addition to their usual privileges, to women with infants, will, in a great measure, if not altogether, put a stop to this most unnatural practice.

That, from various causes, decrease does not always follow negligent treatment, might be shewn, were it not invidious to do so, by comparing some estates that increase, with some that do not.

The most common mode of calling the Jamaica negroes to their labour is by the cracking of the driver's whip, a sound particularly disagreeable to a stranger's ear ; and although it may be justly stated that it is mere noise, and that some noise is required to rouse the people, yet, as it forms part of the constant and unnecessary display of the whip, and as bells and conch shells could easily be substituted for it, the present barbarous practice might be discontinued.

The time of going to and quitting work is much the same throughout Jamaica, with the exception of some coffee properties, where the negroes take their two hours for dinner-time at half past four, instead of the middle of the day; thus, in fact, quitting their labour at half past four. They have, moreover, a kind of task-work on most coffee properties during the picking time, a given quantity of berries being expected from each person, who may quit work as soon as he has gathered his proportion, which, I have been informed, some hard working negroes have been able to do by one or two, p. m.

It is much to be regretted, that considerable *martinetism* exists on some properties, with regard to the time when the negroes ought to assemble in the morning: then it is that the negroes suffer most from the driver's whip; for he unfortunately can, upon his own authority, inflict punishment on those who are not in time; thus making him the judge of an excuse, that might appear quite valid to the manager, though I by no means wish to state that the overseers always lean to the side of justice, believing that not above one half of them are qualified to wield the power, that under existing circumstances must necessarily be entrusted to them.

The most usual mode of calling the negroes from their labour to breakfast, is also by the offensive sound of the driver's whip. The time allowed must always be, by law, half an hour, and is, I believe,

very commonly exceeded; the law also directs that two hours shall be given for dinner-time.

With very few exceptions, the drivers on Jamaica estates carry either whips or cats: on some they are little used; but I am afraid that they are not always mere symbols of authority. During the whole time of my residence in Jamaica, I did not see a single punishment inflicted with the whip; though, as before stated, I have been on estates in various parts of the country, and at all hours of the day; the only inference I mean to draw from this is, that the punishment is by no means so common as it is usually represented. The use of the whip, as a stimulus to labour, is certainly most revolting; and I believe, from what I have observed on my own estate, that it is quite unnecessary; for we perform the same work in the same time, and quite as well without as with it. It is true that the abolition was not sudden, but gradual; the gentlemen who manage my affairs in Jamaica,* (than whom none can be more humane to the negroes, or attentive to their comforts) having paved the way for the total disappearance of this instrument, by not permitting the drivers to use it, though carried by them; the same gentlemen have effected its gradual abolition upon Albion estate, St. David's, the property of R. Hibbert, Esq.; and generally, under their management, it is little used.

On estates where the whip is permitted, as a stimulus to labour, the driver stands near the negroes,

* Messrs. Simpson and Taylor, of Kingston.

when at work, and has the power of inflicting punishment at his own discretion upon those who may, to him, appear idle; a power, as may easily be imagined, liable to much abuse, and one which should be abolished; it being no more than common justice that inquiry should be instituted previous to punishment, setting aside the revolting idea of impelling human beings to their labour by the whip, as if the fear of punishment, after proper inquiry, would not produce all the requisite effect.

In order to afford the reader a general idea of the manner in which negroes on sugar estates perform their labour in presence of the driver, I have given a plate representing the people in their working dresses cutting canes, with the driver leaning on his long stick, which he is scarcely ever without, and having the whip over his shoulder.

The occupations of the head driver, of course, depend upon the nature of the property to which he belongs; from being at the head of the black population of an estate, and from the influence that he consequently possesses, his office is much desired by the negroes.

The divisions of the people into gangs, according to their age or strength, is much the same in various parts of Jamaica, but the work performed by them depends upon the nature of the property; it may be generally stated, that the labour is lighter on coffee settlements and pennis (large cattle farms,) than on sugar estates; but it may also be mentioned, that the

allowances are generally greater on the latter than the former. On pennis and coffee properties they have no night-work, neither have they cane holes to dig, which is hard labour when the land has not been previously ploughed. From having no night labour to perform, it might be concluded, that the negroes on coffee settlements and pennis would consider themselves more fortunately situated than on sugar estates; but the reverse is the fact, for, strange as it may appear, it is a general observation that the negroes seem to enjoy crop time, at least they are decidedly more merry then than at any other period, always excepting Christmas, which they would scarcely be if it were a time of suffering, as has been represented.

On sugar estates, where the negroes are numerous in proportion to the land cultivated, the people are divided into three and four spells during crop time; on properties where the numbers are not so great, into two.

The supply of food from the proprietor to his people varies on different estates, but there is generally a liberal allowance of pickled fish. With the exception of the lowland districts on the south side of the island, such as the lower part of Clarendon, Vere, St. Dorothy's, Liguanea, &c., little guinea corn* is

* The return from a single grain of this corn is enormous. I once had the curiosity to count the number in a head of rather large size, but by no means the largest that I have seen, the amount was 4,307 grains, the produce of one seed.

cultivated, and in those districts only (I believe,) are the people supplied with this article. In the more elevated districts, or in those where the seasons are nearly regular, the people supply themselves abundantly with the produce of their own labour, and generally have a surplus, which they sell at the different markets.

The owners of slaves are by law compelled to afford their people good and ample food, to the value of three shillings and four pence currency per week each, under the penalty of fifty pounds, in cases where they have not grounds fit for the cultivation of provisions, or when the negro provision-grounds have been rendered unproductive from dry weather. In the article of food, however, the negroes seldom or ever have any just cause of complaint; for in this respect I consider them better off than the generality of the European peasantry that I have seen; in fact, very little labour is sufficient to produce a large return in tropical countries; such, indeed, as an inhabitant of the temperate regions of the globe can have but a faint idea of.

The allowance of rum and sugar varies in different properties, and are, as might be expected, more liberal on sugar estates than on pens or coffee settlements.

The negroes throughout the island breed numbers of hogs and poultry, the abundance of either, of course, depending on their own industry, or the ease with which they may find markets for them. Goats, from

their mischievous propensities, are not permitted to be kept on some properties; I have not, however, observed that they were particularly destructive with us.

The negroes are supplied with different quantities of clothing, according to the means or inclination of their owners; and I believe the cases are rare, in which the allowance required by law is alone given. I have not been on many properties at the time of "cloth-serving," but in all the distributions of clothing that I witnessed, the allowance was nearly the same as my own; there are, however, properties where it is more abundant, as there are also others where it is not so great.

The treatment of pregnant women is in general mild, and considerable indulgences are granted them; indeed, such is so clearly the proprietor's interest, that it seems surprising there should be any difference in this respect. The management of children is much the same on different properties.

The negroes are by law allowed (out of crop) one day in every fortnight, exclusive of Sundays, to cultivate their provision-grounds; these days, so allowed, must not be less in number than twenty-six,* making, with the usual holidays and Sundays, eighty-two days in the year that they have to themselves, besides extra time that may be given them by their owners. It is a rare practice to give the people every Saturday out of crop; and yet if it be wished to

* Consolidated Slave Act, clause 4.

“render the sabbath, as much as possible, a day of rest, and for religious worship,”* as by an act of the last session of the House of Assembly, appears to be the disposition of that body, it would seem necessary to give that or some other day for the purpose of cultivating their grounds, and holding markets. The Jamaica markets are at present held on Sundays; there is, however, a Saturday market at Kingston, gradually growing into importance, to the decrease of that held on Sunday. The progress that Christianity has made in that town and neighbourhood, owing principally to the exertions of the Wesleyan and Baptist missionaries, has greatly contributed to this improvement.

Every estate has an hospital, or hot-house, as the negroes are pleased to call it, which of course varies in dimensions and comforts in different places; they are in general perfectly well adapted to the purposes intended, and are regularly attended by white medical men. Many of these buildings, that I have seen, were large, and properly divided into wards. The usual method of remunerating the medical man, if he be not attached to the property with a salary, is by paying him a dollar annually for every negro, whether sick or well, upon the estate which he attends; thus, if there be 300 negroes, he is paid 300

* See the act, Appendix D, passed the last session of the House of Assembly, for the purpose of preventing any negroes being levied on for the debts of their owners on Saturday, Sunday having previously been the only day during which they were protected.

dollars, or 100*l.* currency per annum, for affording medical advice, the medicines being found by the proprietor. If the medical men form partnerships, and attend several properties, which is generally the case, their income becomes considerable.

The negro houses are much the same in different parts of the country, varying, as before stated, with the industry or means of the people; their exterior appearance might induce an Englishman to consider them as devoid of comfort. African ideas, however, differ very considerably in this respect from European, the negroes prefer their own high roofed, low walled, and low doored huts, almost concealed by vegetation, to what we should consider our best English cottages, with separate neatly railed gardens attached; as those persons have had occasion to find, who, in their anxiety to accommodate their people, according to their own ideas of comfort, have had neat dwellings erected on their properties at considerable expense, and then have had great difficulty to persuade the people to live in them; negroes highly resenting any attempt to interfere with their domestic arrangements.

The disgraceful practice of branding is nearly discontinued; I have mentioned instances as having occurred on my own property: it is however but justice to say, that they are generally rare, indeed all persons with whom I conversed on the subject seemed to have but one feeling respecting it, which makes it the more remarkable that some law has not been

passed to declare it illegal, for brutal characters will exist in every community, and who, when possessed of power, are but too likely to abuse it. The feeling entertained in Jamaica on this subject will be best seen by reference, to three cases of trials for cruelly branding, given in the Appendix B.

The religious and moral instruction of the negroes has been very little attended to until lately; it is true that curates were appointed for this purpose, with a salary of 500*l.* currency per annum, but, with few exceptions, they have done little else than ease the rectors in their duty. Instances indeed are not wanting, of individuals who are anxious to impart the knowledge of Christianity to those for whose instruction they have been more especially appointed. It is in vain, however, to deny that very little in the way of religious improvement among the negroes has been effected by the established clergy in Jamaica, except in two or three districts. Hundreds of negroes have no doubt been baptized, but the ceremony seems to have been considered all-sufficient, no religious instruction having been afforded either before or after. The usual practice has been to assemble numbers of the negroes together, either at the churches, or on the estates, sometimes from fifty to a hundred or more; they are merely asked what their names are to be, and then baptized *en masse*, the rector receiving half a crown currency for each person. I by no means wish to state that this is the universal, but it is most certainly the more common practice.

In making these statements, it is only justice to add, that instances have occurred, in which the offers of some of the clergy, to instruct the negroes, have been very ungraciously received, and even refused by the managers of estates; a very different spirit begins now to prevail, and it is hoped that ere long all the negroes will be taught the duties of Christianity, much being expected on that head from the bishop, who will no doubt make every necessary arrangement.

As it might perhaps have an invidious appearance, I would willingly avoid selecting for mention those of the clergy who consider the Christian instruction of the slaves an important part of their duty: but after the observations I have made, it is only justice to mention the Rev. W. Utten, he being the curate of the parish in which my property is situated, whose letter to me, soon after his appointment to the curacy, is inserted in the Appendix C.

The progress that Christianity is now making among the negroes is mainly to be attributed to the labours of the Wesleyan and Baptist Missionaries, but more particularly to those of the former, who are more numerous, and have, I believe, been longer established in the country, than the latter. There are few Moravians in Jamaica, their establishments are however, as they always have been elsewhere, highly useful.

The Wesleyan Missionaries are very deservedly esteemed, though, during the discussions respecting

the Demerara Missionary Smith, they, as well as all the others, were for a time regarded as dangerous persons, they soon however recovered from this impression, more particularly when it was known, that out of 1216 members of their society in Demerara, not one was found concerned in the late rebellion.

From what I have personally observed of the Wesleyan Missionaries in Jamaica, I believe them to be a highly useful body of men, well calculated to instruct the slaves, and who, to a zeal in performing the duties of their mission, have joined a good sense and moderation, eminently calculated to promote their object, to disarm the prejudices against them, and to acquire the confidence of the resident proprietors and managers, without whose co-operation and good-will, little hope can be entertained of a beneficial result to their labours.

Christianity is the more easily introduced among the negroes, as its progress is not obstructed, as it is in India and many other places, by the influence of prejudices in favour of any existing system of religion among them. Obeahism can scarcely be called a religion, being little more than the superstitious dread of the power of certain men, who are supposed capable of injuring others by certain preparations.* The belief in the power of Obeah men has

* I once received information that a strange negro was in the habit of frequenting my negro houses for the purpose of practising Obeah, after a few weeks spent in vain endeavours to secure him, I

very considerably declined of late; but some spells or preparations are still by many considered effective.*

was one day fortunate enough to do so; upon searching him we found a handkerchief in his hat, containing small pieces of chalk, broken bits of various woods of a certain length, roots of grass, pieces of eel skin, two wings of a bat, two or three pieces of old leather, &c.: he endeavoured to throw this bundle away among the brush-wood and trees where I came up with him. At the bottom of his breeches pocket, the search of which he violently resisted, we discovered an Oznaburgh bag, containing a round piece of leather, painted different colours, to the rim of which were attached small bags of various sizes, an English sixpence, a gilt button, the gilt handle of a small drawer, with a small string of beads, the little bags contained several singular mixtures, some of which were most probably poisons (for where the Obeah man cannot produce an effect on the mind, he generally has recourse to poison,) in one bag was a human tooth, enveloped in a mixture, that seemed principally composed of brown soap. Such is the dread the negroes entertain of these people, that I could prevail on none of them to appear and charge him with practising Obeah, though it was notorious that he had done so. He was (when I left Jamaica) to be tried for having "materials in his possession notoriously used in the practice of Obeah," which is punishable under the 53rd clause of the consolidated Slave Act, by transportation from the island, "or such other punishment, not extending to life, as the court shall think proper to direct.

* The negroes still continue to place watchmen (as they call them), in their provision grounds, though the practice is by no means so general as formerly, these are commonly composed of pieces of the wood-ant's nest, the roots of a particular grass, grave dirt, bunches of feathers, &c., either singly or together. Some people even make small boxes, resembling the coffins of infants, line them with black or white cloth, and then fill them up with earth, and very often grave-dirt. These various "watchmen" have ceased to be much attended to by the habitual plunderers of provision

Some negroes entertain ideas of the transmigration of the soul; an old woman on my estate, whom the Wesleyan Missionary (the Rev. I. Crofts,) was instructing previous to baptism, stated her belief that people when they died turned into dust like brick-dust; that those who had behaved ill during their lives became mules, horses, flies, &c.; but that those who had led a good life were born again, and occupied similar situations to those they had previously filled; that blacks would be blacks again, and whites whites.

A belief in ghosts is rather common among the people: a fatal instance of the power of this impression occurred upon my estate while I was there. A negro woman, named Julina Brown, who was slightly affected with a liver complaint, surprised us much, by refusing almost all food for about six weeks: we at first thought she laboured under the influence of Obeah; it however turned out that she fancied her mother's ghost had appeared to her, and warned

grounds: two of my people were overheard one day addressing one of the coffin boxes, and telling it, that it might, if it could, inform its owner of the depredations they had committed in his provision grounds; they laughed heartily, and seemed to enjoy the joke.

Many negroes suppose that grave-dirt trod upon by a thief, if placed in his way for that purpose, will seriously injure or kill him; for example: I once heard a Halse Hall woman, passing my house early in the morning on her way to work, exclaim in a great passion, "Dem somebody tief my corn, I go lay grave-dirt in a pass, (the road or path,) and kill dem; me no care, Henry (meaning me,) hab no nager (negroes).

her of her death, and that whenever she attempted to take any nourishment, the spirit washed its hands in the broth, gruel, or whatever else it might be;—her expression was, that her mother had “put her hand upon her.” To prevent the ghost from doing her any bodily mischief, she had tied her caul round her neck in a piece of blue stuff; this the negroes fancy has that effect. She died of exhaustion: her death would not, I am inclined to think, have taken place, had we sooner known the cause of her refusal to eat; for it was only after repeated questions from the Missionary, that she informed us of it; she appeared at last to be convinced of her error, though not in sufficient time to prevent the effects of her abstinence.

The progress that the Missionaries have made in introducing Christianity among the Jamaica negroes will be best understood by a reference to the last annual Wesleyan and Baptist Missionary reports.

The usual method of punishing negroes is by the whip, cat-o'-nine-tails, and switch, or by confinement in the stocks; the latter punishment, if it be continued any time, the people dislike more than any other; indeed I have known persons, after having been confined two or three nights, (to which the women have a particular objection,) beg to receive a whipping, and be let out. This mode of punishment may therefore be considered most useful, and should be generally adopted, as far as respects women, instead of the present disgraceful custom of flogging

56
 them; for although I am well aware, that they are more troublesome to manage than the men, and that the flogging of women is not now very common in Jamaica, yet no time should be lost in wiping out this stain on the management of negroes, for which there can be no excuse.

It is most surprising that solitary confinement has not been more resorted to, when it is considered how much the negroes dislike being debarred from the revels and pleasures of the night: it has been objected to this method, that it might give occasion to cruelty in the duration of the confinement; but this would be easily obviated, by causing overseers or managers to keep, what they always ought to keep, a book in which all punishments should be entered, under a heavy fine for omissions; this should be sworn to with other estate's papers at the usual periods, when any act of cruelty would be known to, and be punished by, the magistrates; it has also been objected that confinement might injure the health of the negroes, and prevent the work of the estate from going on, (should there be several under punishment at the same time,) both these objections might however be obviated, by making the offenders work during the estate's hours, and by confining them only during their own; for, after all, their principal dislike is to the night confinement.

It is generally agreed that punishment is by no means so common as it used to be; in fact, the testimony of the blacks as well as whites concurs on

this subject; the general improvement in the treatment of the people appears from all accounts to be very considerable; and although much remains to be done, some credit should be given for what has already been effected.

Jobbing gang negroes, those belonging to the free brown and black people, and domestics, may be considered separately from those regularly established on estates.

Jobbing gangs are (I believe) by no means so numerous as they formerly were, the abolition of the slave trade having in a great measure prevented overseers and others who had acquired some little money from investing it in this kind of property, as they cannot now recruit their numbers as formerly by purchase from the slave-ships. Jobbing is now principally performed by persons who own more negroes than they can find employment for on their own properties. The lot of these people is by no means so good as that of the stationary plantation negroes, they have generally hard labour to perform, and are frequently employed far from their own homes, in which latter case they are obliged to content themselves with small temporary huts, which have little appearance of comfort.

The negroes belonging to the free brown and black people are by no means those best treated; one would suppose that this class of owners would feel most sympathy for their slaves; the reverse is, however, generally the fact. I by no means wish to

state that there are not some of these persons who treat their slaves with considerable kindness and indulgence; but it generally so happens, that those who have themselves been in bondage treat their slaves the worst, and this is the case in Jamaica. The negroes belonging to this class of people are often hired out as tradesmen, domestics, &c., to those who may require them.

The domestic negroes are certainly, taken as a whole, well treated by their masters, and are very frequently more indulged than servants are in England; they have in general very little work to perform, many more being required to execute the same work than would be thought necessary in this country. Those employed in respectable families are, as may easily be imagined, well clothed and fed, and by no means the most unhappily situated of the human race; for instance, it would be long before an English lady would assemble her domestics, butler, coachman, footman, lady's maid, &c., and play several hours on the piano-forte, while they danced; yet this I saw done by a lady in Jamaica, the Christmas before last.

As the happiness and comfort of the negroes depend so much upon the persons in whose charge they are placed, I shall make an observation or two respecting them.

When a proprietor is resident in the country, (which is seldom the case in Jamaica,) he has an overseer under him to manage the minor affairs of

the property, and book-keepers in proportion to the number of negroes, sometimes also white carpenters, &c., to superintend the negro tradesmen. The proprietor being resident, it is hardly probable that any cruelties can be practised by those under him, it being so clearly his interest to treat his people well, independent of considerations of humanity. The negroes are also more contented when they have the proprietor, or owner, as they call him among them; and will then do many things cheerfully, that under other circumstances they would murmur at. All their little complaints they bring to him, and however frivolous they may be, he must listen to them, or give great offence. These complaints are often very lengthy and tedious, the only satisfaction the complainants sometimes propose to themselves being to tell their story, and I have known them forget at the end what they commenced with: on these occasions one has only to make them laugh, and they will retire perfectly contented. An old woman once occupied me a good hour with a complaint against a person, who after all turned out to be dead; the offence, moreover, was given five years previously.

When the proprietor is an absentee, he gives a power of attorney to some gentleman in whom he has confidence, who is from this circumstance named an attorney. The attorney then occupies the situation of the proprietor, and directs the management of his property, appointing overseers, &c., receiving for his trouble a certain sum per annum, fixed by the parties

concerned, or else a per centage on the produce, which last is most frequently the case. Some gentlemen are attorneys for many properties, and thence derive a considerable income.

These arrangements would not affect the comforts of the negroes, if the attorney took the same interest in them that the proprietor must necessarily do; but here matters become altered, for the interest of the attorney is to make as much as possible from the estate, and the negroes become only a secondary consideration. When a gentleman has many attorneyships, he becomes what is called a great attorney; the management of many estates by this person is no inconvenience to the proprietor, if his property can be regularly visited, and the grievances of his people redressed, should there be any; but when attorneys have the management of estates at considerable distances from each other, they must necessarily reside too far from some; these are in consequence often entirely left to the overseers, with perhaps the exception of a yearly or half-yearly visit, if even a longer time is not permitted to intervene. Another evil arises from this system; the overseers being numerous, and under the control of one individual, look up to this person for patronage, and seldom or ever trouble their heads about the proprietors of the estates on which they are placed, but consider themselves in the employ, as it is termed, of this or that attorney; they consequently study his interest before that of the proprietor, and think more of making large

crops to benefit their employer, than they do of improving the condition of the people, which is of so much importance to the owner. Overseers so circumstanced feel little interest in estates, from which they may be, and are removed at the shortest notice, at the mere will of the attorney, whose pretexts for so doing are often most frivolous. The comforts of the negroes depend, therefore, greatly on the overseers, for these persons constantly reside among them, and have it in their power to exercise a petty tyranny over them; it is true they can, and do complain to the attorney, for which purpose they undertake long journeys; yet I am afraid there is sometimes a leaning to the side of the overseer, from an idea of "supporting the white people on the estate." For any serious act of injustice, the negroes complain to the magistrates, who, it is but fair to state, most frequently see them righted; the comforts of the people may still, however, be seriously affected by the conduct of the overseer, should he not be a humane man, a circumstance not always sufficiently attended to in his appointment. By all accounts this class of persons has very much improved within the last fifteen years, a great advantage to both proprietors and negroes; yet where men have so much power as overseers have at present, there cannot be too many checks upon their abuse of it.

To obtain respectable men their salaries should be good, and they should not be so completely dependent on the caprice of the attorney; whereas it has

50
unfortunately so happened, that the reductions effected in the expenses of an estate have been made in the salaries of the overseers and book-keepers, while the advantages of the attorney have remained the same, thus diminishing the chances of procuring respectable men to fill those offices.

The overseer is sometimes appointed a joint attorney with some gentleman, who manages the expenses of the estate, the shipping of produce, &c.; this of course can only be done where the overseer is highly respectable and trust-worthy; but when practicable, has been found most advantageous, as he then feels an interest in the estate, and in the good will of the negroes, knowing that he may long reside among them.

Book-keepers are subordinate to the overseers, and are generally young men learning the planting business, and doing any thing but what their name would seem to imply, for books they never keep. Under a strict and capricious overseer their situation is most unpleasant, for he sometimes treats them with wondrous hauteur, quite forgetting that he had been himself in the same situation. Upon many properties the book-keepers are permitted to order punishment, a practice that should not be allowed.

It might be supposed by those who are unacquainted with the negro character, or had not visited the West Indies, or had heard exaggerated statements of the sufferings of the people, that slavery would so depress them as to prevent their enjoying them-

selves, should any person who may have thus thought, have the opportunity of being present at their night dances and plays, he would soon change his opinions.

Negroes in giving dances or plays sometimes go to great expense. I was present at a dance given by my black doctor, as the head negro who attends the hospital is called, which must have cost him more than two doubloons (thirty-two dollars). There was madeira wine, with liquors of various kinds, and an abundance of meat, poultry, fruits, &c. The only money expended on this occasion by the guests was a small trifle each to the fiddlers. Most frequently the host expects remuneration for his trouble and viands, and is paid a certain sum each by his guests.

The following is a literal copy of a negro ball ticket, which came into my possession, the ladies and gentlemen mentioned in it are the slaves upon an estate adjoining my own, and the person giving the dance a free man:—

“ *Vere, Hayses, 1824.*

“ W^M. GOTTSHALK beg leave to inform the Ladies and Gentlemen at Dunkleys, that he intends giving a May Pole dance on the 3rd Saturday in May, wherein every attention shall be paid, and good accomodation, &c. &c.

⋮ TICKET—5 *Shilling Each.*

When a negro wishes to give a dance, he applies for leave to the overseer, who as a matter of course grants

it; the day fixed upon is almost always Saturday, in order that they may keep it up during that night and the next day; the dance, or play, as it is sometimes called, commences about eight o'clock in the evening, and although contrary to law, continues to day-break with scarcely any intermission, those of the old school preferring the goombay and African dances, and those of the new, fiddles, reels, &c. The dance is discontinued at day-break in the morning, and the guests are then feasted; there is generally also a dinner and supper. The dance recommences the second evening, but does not continue through the night.

At Christmas the negroes are altogether without restraint, and go over the country feasting, dancing, and drinking. Many of the girls form themselves into what they call sets, in which the dresses are nearly alike; these sets travel, preceded by flags, drums, and other music, from estate to estate, dancing at the houses of the white people, and in the negro villages, where they are given money, and very often entertained. Their dresses on these occasions are often very expensive, hats that cost a doubloon (sixteen dollars), and blue or white kid shoes at fifteen shillings per pair are by no means uncommon; those that wish to be particularly smart carry parasols.

The negroes have the amusements of the May-pole and Jack in the Green. A spike of the yellow flowers of the American aloe is employed for the former purpose, and when, as sometimes happens, it rises

from twenty to twenty-five feet high, and is handsomely ornamented with other flowers and gilding, it forms a very beautiful object.

Some of the negroes go about at Christmas and Easter attended by drums, &c., and perform much in the same manner as our Mummings. I was much amused on Easter Monday by a party which came to my house from a neighbouring property, consisting of musicians, and a couple of personages fantastically dressed to represent kings or warriors; one of them wore a white mask on his face, and part of the representation had evidently some reference to the play of Richard the Third; for the man in the white mask exclaimed, "A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!" The piece however terminated by Richard killing his antagonist, and then figuring in a sword dance with him.

The various African amusements, in which the negroes formerly took so much delight, are not now kept up with spirit, and Joncanoe himself is getting out of fashion.

In the foregoing statements I have been careful to confine myself for the most part to such facts as have come under my own eyes. If to any one it should seem that a longer residence in the island were necessary for the purpose of observation, I can only say, that I lost no opportunity of obtaining information while there: my object has been to represent

things as they really are, to "extenuate nothing, nor set down aught in malice." I am not conscious of having allowed any prejudices to bias my feelings, nor any theoretical views on the subject to influence me.

It has unfortunately happened, that two extreme parties are opposed to each other, upon the question of negro slavery: one of these would seem to think that the present system is the best possible under existing circumstances, the other represents it as an object of horror and unmingled reprobation; the first is too apt to regard as enemies those who recommend a change in this system, while the other attacks it with unmeasured invective, and in the zeal it professes for the cause of humanity, not unfrequently forgets the obligations of justice and truth. From the collision of parties thus violently opposed, much mischief would have resulted had they been left to themselves; the government however, by occupying a middle station between the two, has in a great measure prevented those consequences that were but too probable, and has, as generally happens on such occasions, obtained the good-will of neither.

The conduct of the Jamaica House of Assembly, in their first proceedings, cannot certainly be commended for discretion; but great allowances should be made for men who had persuaded themselves that the proposed innovations were intended to produce, and would effect, the total destruction of their

properties. Greater moderation has been shewn during the last session, and things have been done for which some credit should be given, such as giving greater facilities to manumissions;* paving the way for Saturday markets, instead of that of Sunday, by preventing the negroes from being seizable on that day;† and making it less probable that they should be taken for debt than heretofore, by allowing collecting constables two and a half per cent. only for seizing them, whereas they receive five per cent. for taking any other property. It was generally understood, that several other measures would have been adopted for the amelioration of the slave system, had there not existed a disposition to resist any thing which might be considered as forced upon the colonists. The general excuse set up was, that although many changes were necessary, the present was not the time to effect them. To the influence of this feeling may be ascribed the loss of the bill to admit negro evidence under certain modifications, it being understood that nearly one-half of the members, composing the House of Assembly, entertained favourable opinions of the propriety of such a measure; yet only one person voted in its favour, the person who brought in the bill even dividing against it.

The recommendations of government, in accord-

* See Appendix D. A clause in this bill dispenses with the hundred pound bond that was previously necessary in cases of manumission.

† See Appendix D.

ance with the Trinidad Order in Council, seem to have produced considerable alarm among our West Indian Assemblies, yet what are these measures, which, if acted upon, are to produce such total destruction of life and property? they are simply, as stated by Mr. Canning in his admirable speech of March 16, 1824—

“ First, Abolition of the use of the whip with regard to females entirely; discontinuance of the use of the whip, as applied to males, as a stimulus to labour; restrictions on the infliction on males of punishment by the whip. Secondly, A religious establishment and religious instruction; and, in order to give time for the acquirement of that instruction, the abolition of the markets, and of slave labour on the Sunday. Thirdly, Encouragement of marriage among the slaves; the keeping together of families of slaves, in sales or transfers of estates; the securing to slaves the enjoyment of property, and the right to distribute it at their death. Fourthly, The admissibility of the evidence of slaves under certain regulations; and, lastly, a power to the slave to purchase his own freedom, or that of his wife or children.”

With respect to the first of these proposed improvements, namely, preventing the infliction of corporal punishment upon women, I can only express my surprise that the continuance of a practice so revolting, should have made that part of the Order in Council necessary.

As to the abolition of the whip as a stimulus to labour, it has been objected that the negroes will not work without coercion, and that therefore the appearance of the whip is necessary, though it may not be used; I confess that I can by no means agree with this opinion, having observed the results of its disuse in the field, even as a symbol of authority, on my own estate, our work being now as well done without it as heretofore with it. With respect to the presence of witnesses at the punishment of a negro, it is difficult to be imagined how this can be objected to by any one who honestly and humanely exercises the necessary authority with which he is intrusted. The book for the entry of punishments is, upon the same principle, equally unobjectionable; in fact one would suppose that a manager would rather wish it, in order that his conduct, in this respect, if ever arraigned, might stand the test of inquiry. It is but justice to state that punishment books are kept, by order of one or two attorneys, on estates of which they have the management. These would seem particularly necessary at the various workhouses into which negroes are often sent by individuals to receive punishment, and which ought never to be done, but under the authority of the magistrates.

On the subject of the religious instruction of the negroes; if we could be insensible to higher obligations, surely every motive of sound policy, security, and interest, would urge its adoption. Is it not also more desirable to govern human beings, whatever be

at their station, in some degree by the influence of moral restraint, rather than rely on force alone? The ecclesiastical establishment in Jamaica has acquired an additional consistency and order, by the appointment of the bishop, the creation of whose office has given great satisfaction in the island, from him every judicious arrangement may be expected for instructing the negroes in the duties of Christianity.* It is to be hoped that the advantages likely to result from these arrangements, will not be incompatible with the continuance of the labours of the Missionaries, whose conduct is so praiseworthy, and whose exertions have already effected so much good.

In order to abolish Sunday markets, some other day must be allowed the negroes to hold them. The Bill to protect negroes from seizure on the Saturday, removes a great difficulty in the way of this object. No slave can be compelled to labour in Jamaica on Sunday, but to restrain them from doing so on their own account, would be considered by them as an act of great tyranny, and the practice cannot be prevented until they have received some religious impression of its impropriety.

With regard to the encouragement of marriage

* The Assembly of Jamaica adopted steps for affording religious instruction to the negroes by the appointment of curates for that purpose; and if the measure has not been attended with the anticipated success, the fault cannot fairly be ascribed to the people, who have nothing else to do with these appointments, than to pay the salaries attached to them.

among the negroes, I have never heard or known of a late instance in Jamaica where it was discouraged ; but the mass of the black population have still a very great objection to this state, which will not, I am afraid, be removed, until the negroes are further advanced in civilization. Families ought never to be separated, nor is it by any means so common a practice as formerly, still however laws cannot be too soon enacted to prevent the possibility of this being done.

Custom has given the enjoyment of property to the Jamaica negroes, though no law has been passed to confirm it ; some of them are in very tolerable circumstances, and even rich : indeed the comforts that many possess would not easily be credited by those, who fancy the negro a mere abject creature, the invariable victim of tyranny and oppression. I presume such persons would scarcely believe me, when I inform them that I paid one of my carpenters for the hire of his mule cart, to transport my baggage from my estate to Kingston, previous to sailing on my return to England.

Custom also gives the negro the power of disposing of his property as he may think fit ; the nearest of kin generally bury the deceased,* and take pos-

* The negroes go to considerable expense at their burials, it being the custom for the next of kin, or who ever succeeds to the property of the deceased, to feast the persons attending, who are, as might be expected from this circumstance, always numerous. The Christians bury their dead with more decency than the other negroes, for

session of his grounds, house, &c. Those who wish their property to be left or divided in any particular manner, make a will for that purpose, one of these wills will be seen by reference to the Appendix E. Although the attempt at legal form may cause a smile, the instrument answered every purpose for which it was intended; for in consequence of claims being made by the relations of the deceased, I read the will to them, after which they were contented, and the widow took possession of all that was left her.

As before stated, there are some persons in Jamaica favourable to the principle of negro evidence being admitted; the prejudices against this measure are however still strong, yet if a negro can fully understand and appreciate the nature and value of an oath, there seems no reason why his evidence should not be received, more particularly under the proposed limitations.

The power to be granted to the negro of purchasing his own freedom, or that of his wife and children, seems so just, that it is painful to suggest any thing in the shape of an objection; but to those who pos-

the latter not only get drunk, but dance all night on these occasions. When a Christian negro dies, one of the white men on the estate reads the funeral service over the grave. Some negroes erect tombs over their deceased relatives, who are almost always buried in their own gardens. A negro once informed me that he did not like being made a Christian of, as the Christians did not dance and make so merry at their funerals as the others.

sess local knowledge, or have made themselves acquainted with the negro character, difficulties will present themselves, which, if not guarded against by some regulations, might involve the planter in great embarrassment, for his best and most industrious people are alone likely to avail themselves of this right, and he therefore would be saddled with the worthless and unprofitable, with whom he would be unable to cultivate the property. It may be said that the persons so liberated would still work for wages, many of them would probably do so as tradesmen, but the difficulty would be to hold out a sufficient inducement to them to perform agricultural labour, an exemption from which *at present* constitutes their idea of freedom.

In considering every part of this question, it must, I think, be apparent to every impartial mind, that it is on all sides beset with difficulties, to steer through which, with safety, must require equal sagacity and caution.

To those who, professing to advocate the cause of humanity and justice, would by a too precipitate zeal put to risk the great interests for which they contend, the eloquent language of a distinguished statesman cannot be too frequently repeated.

“ The question is not—it cannot be made—a question of right, of humanity, of morality merely. It is a question which contemplates a change, great and difficult beyond example; one almost beyond the power of man to accomplish;—a change in the condi-

tion and circumstances of an entire class of our fellow-creatures ;—the recasting, as it were, of a whole generation of mankind. If this be not a question requiring deliberation—cautious and fearful deliberation—I know not what can be so. We must proceed in it with the extremest circumspection ; we must watch the signs of the times, taking advantage of every favourable occurrence ; but reserving a discretion and freedom of action, which it would be madness wantonly to throw away.”*

* Mr. Canning’s speech on the 16th of March, 1824.

APPENDIX A.

THE following are the usual prices at which the Halse Hall negroes sell various articles at the markets in their neighbourhood :

A good fat barrow	{ from a doubloon to a doubloon and half, (sixteen to twenty- four dollars).
A middling sized barrow	from eight to ten dollars.
A small pig	{ from a dollar and a half to two dollars.
A sucking pig	one dollar.
A good milch goat	from nine to ten dollars.
A fat goat, fit for killing	six to eight dollars.
A kid	two dollars.
A couple of pigeons	{ four bits, (two shillings and six- pence, currency).
A couple of fat capons	ten shillings, currency.
A couple of fat pullets	{ five shillings, currency, to a dol- lar.
A common breeding hen	{ four bits, (two shillings and six- pence, currency).
A common cock	half a dollar.
A large bunch of bananas	a macaroni, (a quarter of a dollar).
A middling sized bunch of ba- nanas	{ two bits, (fifteen pence, currency).
A large bunch of plantains	half a dollar.
A middling sized bunch of ditto	four bits.
Six large sweet potatoes	five pence, currency.
A large root of sweet cassada	ditto.
Three pints of great corn (maize)	ditto.

One quart of sugar beans	from one bit to tenpence, curr.
One quart of peas	tenpence, currency.
Pine apples	} each, sugar-loaf, tenpence ; com- mon, fivepence, currency.
Two cocoa-nuts	
A large water-melon	tenpence, currency.
A large pumpkin	tenpence to two bits.
Twelve large oranges	fivepence, currency.
Twelve mangoes	ditto.
Six star apples	ditto.
A dozen and a half of neesberries	ditto.
A large shaddock	ditto.
Six sweet sops	ditto.
A quart of cashew nuts	ditto.
Four large avagato pears	ditto.
Five good cocos	ditto.
A quart of ochros	ditto.
Two cassada cakes, (made from the bitter cassada)	} ditto.
A large yam	
Three small yams	tenpence, currency.
Twisted tobacco, per yard	fivepence.

Numerous fruits, &c., which are sold in the town markets, are not considered of sufficient consequence to be brought to those in the country.

In addition to the above articles, the negroes very often sell the various allowances they receive from the estate, such as clothes, iron pots, herrings, corn, sugar, rum, &c., not requiring them.