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Emancipation in the West Indies
Published in 1838 by the American Anti-Slavery Society, who had commissioned their investigative tour, Thome and Kimball's *Emancipation in the West Indies* immediately became an influential abolitionist text. Many anti-abolitionists in America were prophesying major upheaval should slavery be outlawed. Slavery had been officially abolished in the British West Indies in 1827, and the object of the tour was to assess the results there. The islands visited had followed different models ranging from total abolition to a gradual change through apprenticeship until 1838, and the results had proved those who feared abolition wrong. There had been no insurrection or increase in crime, participation in education and religion among former slaves had generally increased, and only the former slave-owners were unhappy about the economic consequences for their estates. The book contains documentary evidence from residents and officials of the islands, describing the effects of emancipation.
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EMANCIPATION

IN THE

WEST INDIES.

A

SIX MONTHS' TOUR

IN

ANTIGUA, BARBADOS, AND JAMAICA,

IN THE YEAR 1837.

BY JAS. A. THOME, AND J. HORACE KIMBALL.

NEW YORK:
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INTRODUCTION.

It is hardly possible that the success of British West India Emancipation should be more conclusively proved, than it has been by the absence among us of the exultation which awaited its failure. So many thousands of the citizens of the United States, without counting slaveholders, would not have suffered their prophesying to be falsified, if they could have found whereof to manufacture fulfilment. But it is remarkable that, even since the first of August, 1834, the evils of West India emancipation on the lips of the advocates of slavery, or, as the most of them nicely prefer to be termed, the opponents of abolition, have remained in the future tense. The bad reports of the newspapers, spiritless as they have been compared with the predictions, have been traceable, on the slightest inspection, not to emancipation, but to the illegal continuance of slavery, under the cover of its legal substitute. Not the slightest reference to the rash act, whereby the thirty thousand slaves of Antigua were immediately "turned loose," now mingles with the croaking which strives to defend our republican slavery against argument and common sense.

The Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society, deemed it important that the silence which the pro-slavery press of the United States, has seemed so desirous to maintain in regard to what is strangely enough termed
the "great experiment of freedom," should be thoroughly
broken up by a publication of facts and testimony collected
on the spot. To this end, Rev. James A. Thome, and
Joseph H. Kimball, Esq., were deputed to the West
Indies to make the proper investigations. Of their qualifications
for the task, the subsequent pages will furnish the best
evidence: it is proper, however, to remark that Mr. Thome
is thoroughly acquainted with our own system of slavery,
being a native and still a resident of Kentucky, and the son
of a slaveholder, (happily no longer so,) and that Mr. Kim-
ball is well known as the able editor of the Herald of Free-
don, published at Concord, New Hampshire.

They sailed from New York, the last of November,
1836, and returned early in June, 1837. They improved
a short stay at the Danish island of St. Thomas, to
give a description of slavery as it exists there, which, as
it appeared for the most part in the anti-slavery papers,
and as it is not directly connected with the great question
at issue, has not been inserted in the present volume. Hast-
ily touching at some of the other British islands, they made
Antigua, Barbadoes, and Jamaica, successively the objects
of their deliberate and laborious study—as fairly presenting
the three grand phases of the "experiment"—Antigua,
exemplifying immediate unrestricted abolition; Barbadoes,
the best working of the apprenticeship, and Jamaica the
worst. Nine weeks were spent in Antigua, and the re-
mainder of their time was divided between the other two
islands.

The reception of the delegates was in the highest degree
favorable to the promotion of their object, and their work
will show how well they have used the extraordinary faci-
INTRODUCTION.

... lities afforded them. The committee have in some instances, restored testimonials which their modesty led them to suppress, showing in what estimation they themselves, as well as the object of their mission, were held by some of the most distinguished persons in the islands which they visited.

So wide was the field before them, and so rich and various the fruit to be gathered, that they were tempted to go far beyond the strength supplied by the failing health they carried with them. Most nobly did they postpone every personal consideration to the interests of the cause, and the reader will, we think, agree with us, that they have achieved a result which undiminished energies could not have been expected to exceed—a result sufficient, if anything could be, to justify the sacrifice it cost them. We regret to add that the labors and exposures of Mr. Kimball, so far prevented his recovery from the disease which obliged him to resort to a milder climate, or perhaps we should say aggravated it, that he has been compelled to leave to his colleague nearly the whole burden of preparing for the press—which, together with the great labor of condensing from the immense amount of collected materials, accounts for the delay of the publication.

It will be perceived that the delegates rest nothing of importance on their own unattested observation. At every point they are fortified by the statements of a multitude of responsible persons in the islands, whose names, when not forbidden, they have taken the liberty to use in behalf of humanity. Many of these statements were given in the handwriting of the parties, and are in the possession of the Executive Committee. Most of these island authorities are as unchallengeable on the score of previous leaning towards abolitionism, as Mr. McDuffie, or Mr. Calhoun
INTRODUCTION.

would be two years hence, if slavery were to be abolished throughout the United States to-morrow.

Among the points established in this work, beyond the power of dispute or cavil, are the following:

1. That the act of IMMEDIATE EMANCIPATION in Antigua, was not attended with any disorder whatever.
2. That the emancipated slaves have readily, faithfully, and efficiently worked for wages from the first.
3. That wherever there has been any disturbance in the working of the apprenticeship, it has been invariably by the fault of the masters, or of the officers charged with the execution of the "Abolition Act."
4. That the prejudice of caste is fast disappearing in the emancipated islands.
5. That the apprenticeship was not sought for by the planters as a preparation for freedom.
6. That no such preparation was needed.
7. That the planters who have fairly made the "experiment," now greatly prefer the new system to the old.
8. That the emancipated people are perceptibly rising in the scale of civilization, morals, and religion.

From these established facts, reason cannot fail to make its inferences in favor of the two and a half millions of slaves in our republic. We present the work to our countymen who yet hold slaves, with the utmost confidence that its perusal will not leave in their minds a doubt, either of the duty or perfect safety of immediate emancipation, however it may fail to persuade their hearts—which God grant it may not!

By order of the Executive Committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society.

New York, February, 1838.
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ERRATA.

Page 267, seventh line from the bottom, for 30,000 read 13,000.
Page 270, third line from the bottom, for thirteen hundred read thirteen thousand.
EXPLANATION OF TERMS USED IN THE NARRATIVE.

1. The words 'Clergy' and 'Missionary' are used to distinguish between the ministers of the English or Scotch church, and those of all other denominations.

2. The terms 'church' and 'chapel' denote a corresponding distinction in the places of worship, though the English Church have what are technically called 'chapels of ease'.

3. 'Manager' and 'overseer' are terms designating in different islands the same station. In Antigua and Barbados, manager is the word in general use, in Jamaica it is overseer—both meaning the practical conductor or immediate superintendent of an estate. In our own country, a peculiar odium attaches to the latter term. In the West Indies, the station of manager or overseer is an honorable one; proprietors of estates, and even men of rank, do not hesitate to occupy it.

4. The terms 'colored' and 'black' or 'negro' indicate a distinction long kept up in the West Indies between the mixed blood and the pure negro. The former as a body were few previous to the abolition act; and for this reason chiefly we presume the term of distinction was originally applied to them. To have used these terms interchangeably in accordance with the usage in the United States, would have occasioned endless confusion in the narrative.

5. 'Praedial' and 'non-praedial' are terms used in the apprenticeship colonies to mark the difference between the agricultural class and the domestic; the former are called praedials, the latter non-praedials.