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# "Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question"

by

Thomas Carlyle

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THE following occasional discourse, delivered by we know not whom, and of date seemingly above a year back, may, perhaps, be welcome to here and there a speculative reader. It comes to us -- no speaker named, no time or place assigned, no commentary of any sort given in the hand-writing of the so-called "Doctor," properly "Absconded Reporter," Dr. Phelin M'Quirk, whose singular powers of reporting, and also whose debts, extravagances, and sorrowful insidious finance-operations, now winded up by a sudden disappearance, to the grief of many poor trades-people, are making too much noise in the police offices at present! Of M'Quirk's composition, we by no means suppose it to be; but from M'Quirk, as the last traceable source, it comes to us; offered, in fact, by his respectable, unfortunate landlady, desirous to make up part of her losses in this way.

To absconded reporters, who bilk their lodgings, we have, of course, no account to give; but if the speaker be of any eminence or substantiality, and feel himself aggrieved by the transaction, let him understand that such, and such only, is our connection with him or his affairs. As the colonial and negro question is still alive, and likely to grow livelier for some time, we have accepted the article, at a cheap market rate; and give it publicity, without, in the least, committing ourselves to the strange doctrines and notions shadowed forth in it. Doctrines and notions which, we rather suspect, are pretty much in a minority of one, in the present era of the world. Here, sure enough, are peculiar views of the rights of negroes; involving, it is probable, peculiar ditto of innumerable other rights, duties, expectations, wrongs and disappointments, much argued of, by logic and by grape-shot, in these emancipated epochs of the human mind. Silence now, however, and let the speaker himself enter:

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My Philanthropic Friends: It is my painful duty to address some words to you, this evening, upon the rights of negroes. Taking, as we hope we do, an extensive survey of social affairs, which we find all in a state of the frightfullest embroilment, and, as it were, of inextricable final bankruptcy, just at present, and being desirous to adjust ourselves in that huge up-break, and unutterable welter of tumbling ruins, and to see well that our grand proposed Association of Associations, the UNIVERSAL ABOLITION-OF-PAIN-ASSOCIATION, which is meant to be the consummate golden flower, and summary of modern philanthropisms, all in one, do not issue as a universal "Sluggard-and-Scoundrel Protection Society" -- we have judged that, before constituting ourselves, it would be very proper to commune earnestly with one another, and discourse together on the leading elements of our great problem, which surely is one of the greatest. With this view, the council has decided, both that the negro question, as lying at the bottom, was to be the first handled, and, if possible, the first settled; and then, also, what was of much more questionable wisdom, that -- that, in short, I was to be speaker on the occasion. An honorable duty! yet, as I said, a painful one! Well, you shall hear what I have to say on the matter; and you will not, in the least, like it.

West Indian affairs, as we all know, and some of us know to our cost, are in a rather troublous condition this good while. In regard to West Indian affairs, however, Lord John Russell is able to comfort us with one fact, indisputable where so many are dubious, that the negroes are all very happy and doing well. A fact very comfortable indeed. West Indian whites, it is admitted, are far enough from happy; West Indian colonies not unlike sinking wholly into ruin; at home, too, the British whites are rather badly off-several millions of them hanging on the verge of continual famine --

and, in single towns, many thousands of them very sore put to it, at this time, not to live "well," or as a man should, in any sense, temporal or spiritual, but to live at all--these, again, are uncomfortable facts; and they are extremely extensive and important ones. But, thank heaven, our interesting black population equaling, almost, in number of heads, one of the ridings of Yorkshire, and in *worth* (in quantity of intellect, faculty, docility, energy, and available human valor and value), perhaps one of the streets of seven dials --are all doing remarkably well. "Sweet blighted lilies "'-- as the American epitaph on the nigger child has it -- sweet blighted lilies, they are holding up their heads again! How pleasant, in the universal bankruptcy abroad, and dim, dreary stagnancy at home, as if, for England too, there remained nothing but to suppress Chartist riots, banish united Irishmen, vote the supplies, and *wait*, with arms crossed, till black anarchy and social death devoured us also, as it has done the others; how pleasant to have always this fact to fall back upon; our beautiful black darlings are at last happy; with little labor except to the teeth, *which*, surely, in those excellent horse-jaws of theirs, will not fail!

Exeter Hall, my philanthropic friends, has had its way in this matter. The twenty millions, a mere trifle, despatched with a single dash of the pen, are paid; and, far over the sea, we have a few black persons rendered extremely "free" indeed. Sitting yonder, with their beautiful muzzles up to the ears in pumpkins, imbibing sweet pulps and juices; [p.529] the grinder and incisor teeth ready for every new work, and the pumpkins cheap as grass in those rich climates; while the sugar crops rot round them, uncut, because labor cannot be hired, so cheap are the pumpkins; and at home, we are but required to rasp from the breakfast loaves of our own English laborers, some slight "differential sugar duties." and lend a poor half million, or a few more millions, now and then, to keep that beautiful state of matters going on. A state of matters lovely to contemplate, in these emancipated epochs of the human mind, which has earned us, not only the praises of Exeter Hall, and loud, long-eared halleluiahs of laudatory psalmody from the friends of freedom everywhere, but lasting favor (it is hoped) from the heavenly powers themselves; which may, at least, justly appeal to the heavenly powers, and ask them, if ever, in terrestrial procedure, they saw the match of it! Certainly, in the past history of the human species, it has no parallel; nor, one hopes, will it have in the future.

Sunk in deep froth-oceans of "Benevolence," "Fraternity," "Emancipation-principle," "Christian Philanthropy," and other most amiable-looking, but most baseless, and, in the end, baleful and all-bewildering jargon -- sad product of a skeptical eighteenth century, and of poor human hearts, left *destitute* of any earnest guidance, and disbelieving that there ever was any, christian or heathen, and reduced to believe, in rosepink sentimentalism alone, and to cultivate the same under its christian, anti-christian, broad-brimmed, Brutus-headed, and other forms -- has not the human species gone strange roads during that period? and poor Exeter Hall, cultivating the broad-brimmed form of christian sentimentalism, and long talking, and bleating, and braying, in that strain -- has it not worked out results? Our West India legislatings, with their spoutings. anti-spoutings, and interminable jangle and babble--our twenty millions, down on the nail for blacks of our own--thirty gradual millions more, and many brave British lives to boot, in watching blacks of other people's--and now, at last, our ruined sugar estates, differential sugar duties, "immigration loan," and beautiful blacks, sitting there, up to the ears in pumpkins, and doleful whites, sitting here, without potatoes to eat; never, till now, I think, did the sun look down on such a jumble of human nonsenses, of which, with the two hot nights of the Missing-

Despatch Debate,\* God grant that the measure might now, at last, be full! But no, it is not yet full; we have a long way to travel back, and terrible flounderings to make, and, in fact, an immense load of nonsense to dislodge from our poor heads, and manifold cobwebs to rend from our poor eyes, before we get into the road again, and can begin to act as serious men that have work to do in this universe, and no longer as windy sentimentalists, that merely have speeches to deliver, and despatches to write. O Heaven! in West Indian matters, and in all manner of matters, it is so with us--the more is the sorrow! The West Indies, it appears, are short of labor, as, indeed, is very conceivable in those circumstances. Where a black man, by working half an hour a day (such is the calculation), can supply himself, by aid of sun and soil, with as much pumpkin as will suffice, he is likely to be [p.530] a little stiff to raise into hard work! Supply and demand, which, science says, should be brought to bear on him, have an up-hill task--of it with such a man. Strong sun supplies itself gratis -- rich soil, in those unpeopled or half-peopled regions, almost gratis: these are *his* supply; and half an hour a day, directed upon these, will produce pumpkin, which is his "demand." The fortunate black man! very swiftly does he settle his account with supply and demand; not so swiftly the less fortunate white man of these tropical localities. He, himself, cannot work; and his black neighbor, rich in pumpkin, is in no haste to help him. Sunk to the ears in pumpkin, imbibing saccharine juices, and much at his ease in the creation, he can listen to the less fortunate white man's "demand," and take his own time in supplying it. Higher wages, massa; higher, for your cane crop cannot wait; still higher -- till no conceivable opulence of cane crop will cover such wages! In Demerara, as I read

in the blue book of last year, the cane crop, far and wide, stands rotting; the fortunate black gentlemen: strong in their pumpkins, having all struck till the "demand" rise a little. Sweet, blighted lilies, now getting up their heads again!

Science, however, has a remedy still. Since the demand is so pressing, and the supply so inadequate (equal, in fact, to nothing in some places, as appears), increase the supply; bring more blacks into the labor market, then will the rate fall, says science. Not the least surprising part of our West Indian policy, is this recipe of "immigration;" of keeping down the labor-market in those islands, by importing new Africans to labor and live there. If the Africans that are already there could be made to lay down their pumpkins and labor for a living, there are already Africans enough. If the new Africans, after laboring a little, take to pumpkins like the others, what remedy is there? To bring in new and ever new Africans, say you, till pumpkins themselves grow dear -- till the country is crowded with Africans, and black men there, like white men here, are forced, by hunger, to labor for their living? That will be a consummation. To have "emancipated" the West Indies into a *black Ireland* -- "free," indeed, but an Ireland, and black! The world may yet see prodigies, and reality be stranger than a nightmare dream.

Our own white or sallow Ireland, sluttishly starving, from age to age, on its act-of-parliament "freedom," was hitherto the flower of mismanagement among the nations; but what will this be to a negro Ireland, with pumpkins themselves fallen scarce like potatoes? Imagination cannot fathom such an object; the belly of chaos never held the like. The human mind, in its wide wanderings, has not dreamt, yet, of such a "freedom" as that will be. Toward that, if Exeter Hall, and science of supply and demand, are to continue our guides in the matter, we are daily traveling, and even struggling, with loans of half a million, and such like, to accelerate ourselves.

Truly, my philanthropic friends, Exeter Hall philanthropy is wonderful; and the social science -- not a "gay science," but a rueful -- which finds the secret of this universe in "supply and demand," and reduces the duty of human governors to that of letting men alone, is also wonderful. Not a "gay science," I should say, like some we have heard of; no, a dreary, desolate and, indeed, quite abject and distressing one; [p.531] what we might call, by way of eminence, the *dismal science*. These two, Exeter Hall philanthropy and the Dismal Science, led by any sacred cause of black emancipation, or the like, to fall in love and make a wedding of it -- will give birth to progenies and prodigies: dark extensive moon-calves, unnameable abortions, wide-coiled monstrosities, such as the world has not seen hitherto!

In fact, it will behoove us of this English nation, to overhaul our West Indian procedure from top to bottom; and to ascertain a little better what it is that fact and nature demand of us, and what only Exeter Hall, wedded to the Dismal Science, demands. To the former set of demands we will endeavor, at our peril -- and worse peril than our purse's, at our soul's peril -- to give all obedience. To the latter we will very frequently demur, and try if we cannot stop short where they contradict the former, and, especially, *before* arriving at the black throat of ruin, whither they appear to be leading us. Alas, in many other provinces, beside the West Indian, that unhappy wedlock of philanthropic liberalism and the Dismal Science, has engendered such all-enveloping delusions, of the moon-calf sort -- and wrought huge woe for us, and for the poor, civilized world, in these days! And sore will be the battle with said moon-calves; and terrible the struggle to return out of our delusions, floating rapidly on which, not the West Indies alone, but Europe generally, is nearing the Niagara Falls. [*Here various persons, in an agitated manner, with an air of indignation, left the room; especially one very tall gentleman, in white trousers, whose boots creaked much. The President, in a resolved voice, with a look of official rigor, whatever his own private feelings might be, enjoined, "Silence! Silence!" The meeting again sat motionless.*]

My philanthropic friends, can you discern no fixed headlands in this wide-weltering deluge of benevolent twaddle and revolutionary grapeshot that has burst forth on us -- no sure bearings at all? Fact and nature, it seems to me, say a few words to us, if, happily, we have still an ear for fact and nature. Let us listen a little, and try. And first, with regard to the West Indies, it may be laid down as a principle, which no eloquence in Exeter Hall, or Westminster Hall, or elsewhere, can invalidate or hide, except for a short time only, that no black man, who will not work according to what ability the gods have given him for working, has the smallest right to eat pumpkin, or to any fraction of land that will grow pumpkin, however plentiful such land may be, but has an indisputable and perpetual *right* to be compelled, by the real proprietors of said land, to do competent work for his living. This is the everlasting duty of all men, black or white, who are born into this world. To do competent work, to labor honestly according to the ability given them; for that, and for no other purpose, was each one of us sent into this world; and woe is to every man who by friend or by foe, is prevented from fulfilling this, the end of his being. That is the "unhappy" lot -- lot equally unhappy cannot otherwise

be provided for man. Whatsoever prohibits or prevents a man from this, his sacred appointment, to labor while he lives on earth -- that, I say, is the man's deadliest enemy; and all men are called upon to do what is in their power, or opportunity, toward delivering him from it. If it be his own indolence that prevents and prohibits him, then his own indolence is the [p.532] enemy he must be delivered from; and the first "right" he has -- poor indolent blockhead, black or white -- is, that every *unprohibited* man, whatsoever wiser, more industrious person may be passing that way, shall endeavor to "emancipate" him from his indolence, and, by some wise means, as I said, compel him to do the work he is fit for. This is the eternal law of nature for a man, my beneficent Exeter Hall friends; this, that he shall be permitted, encouraged, and, if need be, compelled, to do what work the Maker of him has intended, by the making of him for this world. Not that he should eat pumpkin with never such felicity in the West India islands is, or can be, the blessedness of our black friend -- but that he should do useful work there, according as the gifts have been bestowed on him for that. And his own happiness, and that of others around him, will alone be possible, by his and their getting into such a relation that this can be permitted him, and, in case of need, that this can be compelled him. I beg you to understand this, for you seem to have a little forgotten it, and there lie a thousand inferences in it, not quite useless for Exeter Hall, at present. The idle black man in the West Indies, had, not long since, the right, and will again, under better form, if it please Heaven, have the right (actually the first "right of man" for an indolent person) to be *compelled* to work as he was fit, and to *do* the Maker's will, who had constructed him with such and such prefigurements of capability. And I incessantly pray Heaven, all men, the whitest alike, and the blackest, the richest and the poorest, in other regions of the world, had attained precisely the same right, the divine right of being compelled (if "permitted" will not answer) to do what work they are appointed for, and not to go idle another minute, in a life so short! Alas, we had then a perfect world! and the millennium and true "organization of labor," and reign of complete blessedness, for all workers and men, had then arrived, which, in these, our own poor districts of the planet, as we all lament to know, it is very far from having yet done.

Let me suggest another consideration withal; West India islands, still full of waste fertility, produce abundant pumpkins; pumpkins, however, you will please to observe, are not the sole requisite for human well-being. No! for a pig they are the one thing needful -- but for a man, they are only the first of several things needful. And now, as to the right of chief management in cultivating those West India lands -- as to the "right of property" so called, and of doing what you like with your own. The question is abstruse enough. Who it may be that has a right to raise pumpkins and other produce on those islands, perhaps none can, except temporarily, decide. The islands are good withal for pepper, for sugar, for sago, arrowroot, for coffee, perhaps for cinnamon and precious spices-things far nobler than pumpkins, and leading toward commerces, arts, politics, and social developments, which, alone, are the noble product, where men (and not pigs with pumpkins) are the parties concerned! Well, all this fruit, too, fruit spicy and commercial, fruit spiritual and celestial, so far beyond the merely pumpkinish and grossly terrene, lies in the West India lands; and the ultimate "proprietorship" of them -- why, I suppose, it will vest in him who can the *best* educe from them, whatever of noble produce they were created fit for yielding. He, I compute, is the real [p.533] "Vicegerent of the Maker" there; in him, better and better chosen, and not in another, is the "property" vested by decree of Heaven's chancery itself!

Up to this time, it is the Saxon British mainly; they hitherto have cultivated with some manfulness; and when a manfuller class of cultivators, stronger, worthier to have such land, abler to bring fruit from it, shall make their appearance, they, doubt it not, by fortune of war, and other confused negotiation and vicissitude, will be declared by nature and fact to *be* the worthier, and will become proprietors, perhaps, also, only for a time. That is the law, I take it, ultimate supreme, for all lands, in all countries, under this sky. The one perfect, Eternal Proprietor, is the Maker who created them; the temporary, better or worse proprietor, is he whom the Maker has sent on that mission; he who the best hitherto can educe from said lands the beneficent gifts the Maker endowed them with -- or, which is but another definition of the same person, he who leads hitherto the manfullest life on that bit of soil, doing better than another yet found can do, the Eternal Purpose and Supreme Will there. And now observe, my friends. it was not Black Quashee, or those he represents, that made those West India islands what they are, or can, by any hypothesis, be considered to have the right of growing pumpkins there. For countless ages, since they first mounted oozy on the back of earthquakes, from their dark bed in the ocean deeps, and reeking, saluted the tropical sun, and ever onward, till the European white man first saw them, some three short centuries ago, those islands had produced mere jungle, savagery, poison reptiles and swamp malaria till the white European first saw them, they were, as if not yet created; their noble elements of cinnamon -- sugar, coffee, pepper, black and gray, lying all asleep, waiting the white Enchanter, who should say to them, awake! Till the end of human history, and the sounding of the trump of doom, they might have lain so, had Quashee, and the like of him, been the only artists in the game. Swamps, fever-jungles, maneating caribs, rattle-snakes,

and reeking waste and putrefaction: this had been the produce of them under the incompetent caribal (what we call cannibal) possessors till that time; and Quashee knows, himself, whether ever he could have introduced an improvement. Him, had he, by a miraculous chance, been wafted thither, the caribals would have eaten, rolling him as a fat morsel under their tongue-for him, till the sounding of the trump of doom, the rattlesnakes and savageries would have held on their way. It was not he, then -- it was another than he! Never, by art of his, could one pumpkin have grown there, to solace any human throat; nothing but savagery, and reeking putrefaction could have grown there! These plentiful pumpkins, I say, therefore, are not his; no, they are another's; they are only his under conditions -- conditions which Exeter Hall, for the present, has forgotten; but which nature, and the Eternal Powers, have, by no manner of means, forgotten, but do, at all moments, keep in mind; and, at the right moment, will, with the due impressiveness, perhaps in rather a terrible manner, bring again to our mind also! If Quashee will not honestly aid in bringing out those sugars, cinnamons, and nobler products of the West India islands, for the benefit [p.534] of all mankind, then, I say, neither will the powers permit Quashee to continue growing pumpkins there for his own lazy benefit, but will sheer him out, by and by, like a lazy gourd overshadowing rich ground -- him, and all that partake with him -- perhaps in a very terrible manner. For, under favor of Exeter Hall, the "terrible manner" is not yet quite extinct with the destinies in this universe; nor will it quite cease, I apprehend, for soft-sawder or philanthropic stump-oratory, now, or henceforth. No! the gods wish, besides pumpkins, that spices and valuable products be grown in their West Indies; thus much they have declared in so making the West Indies; infinitely more they wish -- that manful, industrious men occupy their West Indies, not indolent, two-legged cattle, however "happy" over their abundant pumpkins! Both these things, we may be assured, the immortal gods have decided upon -- passed their eternal act of parliament for; and both of them, though all terrestrial parliaments and entities oppose it to the death, shall be done. Quashee, if he will not help in bringing out the spices, will get himself made a slave again (which state will be a little less ugly than his present one), and with beneficent whip, since other methods avail not, will be compelled to work. Or, alas, let him look across to Hayti, and trace a far sterner prophecy! Let him, by his ugliness, idleness, rebellion, banish all white men from the West Indies, and make it all one Hayti, with little or no sugar-growing, black Peter exterminating black Paul, and, where a garden of the Hesperides might be, nothing but a tropical dog-kennel and pestiferous jungle -- does he think that will forever continue pleasant to gods and men? I see men, the rose-pink cant all peeled away from them, land one day on those black coasts; men sent by the laws of this universe, and the inexorable course of things; men hungry for gold, remorseless, fierce as old buccaneers were -- and a doom for Quashee, which I had rather not contemplate! The gods are long-suffering; but the law, from the beginning, was, He that will not work shall perish from the earth -- and the patience of the gods has limits!

Before the West Indies could grow a pumpkin for any negro, how much European heroism had to spend itself in obscure battle; to sink, in mortal agony, before the jungles, the putrescences and waste savageries could become arable, and the devils be, in some measure, chained there! The West Indies grow pineapples, and sweet fruits, and spices; we hope they will, one day, grow beautiful, heroic human lives too, which is surely the ultimate object they were made for; beautiful souls and brave; sages, poets, what not -- making the earth nobler round them, as their kindred from of old have been doing; true "splinters of the old Hartz Rock;" heroic white men, worthy to be called old Saxons, browned with a mahogany tint in those new climates and conditions. But under the soil of Jamaica, before it could even produce spices, or any pumpkin, the bones of many thousand British men had to be laid. Brave Colonel Fortescue, brave Colonel Sedgwick, brave Colonel Brayne -- the dust of many thousand strong old English hearts lies there, worn down swiftly in frightful travail, chaining the devils, which were manifold. Heroic Blake contributed a bit of his life to that Jamaica. A bit of the great Protector's own life lies there -- beneath those pumpkins lies a bit of the life that was Oliver Cromwell's. How [p.535] the great Protector would have rejoiced, to think that all this was to issue in growing pumpkins, to keep Quashee in a comfortably idle condition! No, that is not the ultimate issue, not that!

The West Indian whites, so soon as this bewilderment of philanthropic and other jargon abates from them, and their poor eyes get to discern a little what the facts are and what the laws are, will strike into another course, I apprehend! I apprehend they will, as a preliminary, resolutely *refuse* to permit the black man any privilege whatever of pumpkins till he agrees for work in return. Not a square inch of soil in those fruitful isles, purchased by British blood, shall any black man hold to grow pumpkins for him, except on terms that are fair toward Britain. Fair; see that they be not unfair, not toward ourselves, and still more, not toward him. For injustice is *forever* accursed; and precisely our unfairness toward the enslaved black man has -- by inevitable revulsion and fated turn of the wheel -- brought about these present confusions. Fair toward Britain it will be, that Quashee give work for privilege to grow pumpkins. Not a pumpkin, Quashee, not a square yard of soil, till you agree to do the state so many days of service. Annually that soil will grow

you pumpkins; but annually also without fail, shall you, for the owner thereof, do your appointed days of labor. The state has plenty of waste soil; but the state will religiously give you none of it on other terms. The state wants sugar from these islands, and means to have it; wants virtuous industry in these islands, and must have it. The state demands of you such service as will bring these results, this latter result which includes all. Not a black Ireland, by immigration, and boundless black supply for the demand; not that -- may the gods forbid! -- but a regulated West Indies, with black working population in adequate numbers; all "happy," if they find it possible; and *not* entirely unbeautiful to gods and men, which latter result they *must* find possible! All "happy" enough; that is to say, all working according to the faculty they have got; making a little more divine this earth which the gods have given them. Is there any other "happiness" -- if it be not that of pigs fattening daily to the slaughter? So will the state speak by and by.

Any poor, idle black man, any idle white man, rich or poor, is a mere eye-sore to the state; a perpetual blister on the skin of the state. The state is taking measures. some of them rather extensive, in Europe at this very time, and already, is in Paris, Berlin, and elsewhere, rather tremendous measures, to *get* its rich white then set to work; for, alas. they also have sat, negro-like, up to the ears in pumpkin, regardless of "work," and of a world all going to waste for their idleness! Extensive measures, I say; and already (as, in all European lands, this scandalous fear of street-barricades and fugitive sham-kings exhibits) *tremendous* measures for the thing is instant to be done.

The thing must be done everywhere: *must* is the word. Only it is so terribly difficult to do; and will take generations yet, this of getting our rich European white men "set to work!" But yours in the West Indies, my obscure black friends, your work, and the getting of you set to it, is a simple affair; and by diligence, the West Indian legislatures, and royal governor, setting their faces fairly to the problem, will get it done. You are not "slaves" now; nor do I wish, if it can be [p.536] avoided, to see you slaves again; but decidedly you will have to be servants to those that are born *wiser* than you, that are born lords of you -- servants to the whites, if they *are* (as what mortal can doubt they are?) born wiser than you. That, you may depend upon it, my obscure black friends, is and was always the law of the world, for you and for all men; to be servants, the more foolish of us to the more wise; and only sorrow, futility and disappointment will betide both, till both, in some approximate degree, get to conform to the same. Heaven's laws are not repealable by earth, however earth may try and it has been trying hard. in some directions, of late! I say, no well being, and in the end no being at all, will be possible for you or us, if the law of heaven is not complied with. And if "slave" mean essentially "servant hired for life," or by a contract of long continuance, and not easily dissoluble -- I ask, Whether in all human things, the "contract of long continuance" is not precisely the contract to be desired, were the right terms once found for it? Servant hired for life, were the right terms once found, which I do not pretend they are, seems to me much preferable to servants hired for the month, or by contract dissoluble in a day. An ill-situated servant, that -- servant grown to be *nomadic*; between whom and his master a good relation *cannot* easily spring up!

To state articulately, and put into practical law books, what on all sides is *fair* from the West India white to the West India black; what relations the Eternal Maker *has* established between these two creatures of His: what he has written down, with intricate but ineffaceable record, legible to candid human insight, in the respective qualities, strengths, necessities and capabilities of each of the two; this will be a long problem; only to be solved by continuous human endeavor, and earnest effort gradually perfecting itself as experience successively yields new light to it. This will be to "find the right terms" of a contract that will endure, and be sanctioned by Heaven and obtain prosperity on earth, between the two. A long problem, terribly neglected hitherto; whence these West Indian sorrows; and Exeter Hall monstrosities. just now! But a problem which must be entered upon, and by degrees be completed. A problem which, I think, the English people, if they mean to retain human colonies, and not black Irelands in addition to the white, cannot begin too soon! What are the true relations between negro and white, their mutual duties under the sight of the Maker of them both; what human laws will assist both to comply more and more with these? The solution, only to be gained by earnest endeavor and sincere experience, such as have never yet been bestowed on it, is not yet here; the solution is perhaps still distant; but some approximation to it, various real approximations, could be made. and must be made; this of declaring that negro and white are unrelated, loose from one another, on a footing of perfect equality, and subject to no law but that of supply and demand according to the Dismal Science; this which contradicts the palpablest facts, is clearly no solution, but a cutting of the knot assunder; and every hour we persist in this is leading us toward *dissolution* instead of solution.

What, then, is practicably to be done? Much, very much, my [p.537] friends, to which it hardly falls to me to allude at present; but all this of perfect equality, of cutting loose from one another; all this, with "immigration loan," "happiness

of black peasantry," and the other melancholy stuff that has followed from it, will first of all require to be undone, and have the ground cleared of it, by way of preliminary to "doing!"

Already one hears of black *Adscripti glebae*; which seems a promising arrangement, one of the first to suggest itself in such a complicity. It appears the Dutch blacks, in Java, are already a kind of *Adscripts*, after the manner of the old European serfs; bound by royal authority, to give so many days of work a year. Is not this something like a real approximation; the first step toward all manner of such? Wherever, in British territory, there exists a black man, and needful work to the just extent is not to be got out of him, such a law, in defect of better, should be brought to bear upon said black man! How many laws of like purport, conceivable some of them, might be brought to bear upon the black man and the white, with all despatch, by way of solution instead of dissolution to their complicated case just now! On the whole, it ought to be rendered possible, ought it not, for white men to live beside black men, and in some just manner to command black men, and produce West Indian fruitfulness by means of them? West Indian fruitfulness will need to be produced. If the English cannot find the method for that, they may rest assured there will another come (brother Jonathan or still another) who can. He it is whom the gods will bid continue in the West Indies, bidding us ignominiously, Depart, ye quack-ridden. incompetent!--

One other remark. as to the present trade in slaves, and to our suppression of the same. If buying of black war-captives in Africa, and bringing them over to the sugar-islands for sale again, be, as I think it is, a contradiction of the laws of this universe, let us heartily pray to Heaven to end the practice; let us ourselves help Heaven to end it, wherever the opportunity is given. If it be the most flagrant and alarming contradiction to the said laws which is now witnessed on this earth; so flagrant and alarming that a just man cannot exist, and follow his affairs in the same planet with it; why, then indeed ----. But is it, quite certainly, such? Alas, look at that group of *unsold*; unbought, unmarketable Irish "free" citizens, dying there in the ditch, whither my lord of rackrent and the constitutional sheriffs have evicted them; or at those "divine missionaries," of the same free country, now traversing, with rags on back and child on each arm, the principal thoroughfares of London, to tell men what "freedom" really is; -- and admit that there may be doubts on that point! But if it *is*, I say, the most alarming contradiction to the said laws which is now witnessed on this earth; so flagrant a contradiction that a just man cannot exist, and follow his affairs in the same planet with it, then, sure enough, let us, in God's name, fling aside all our affairs, and hasten out to put an end to it, as the first thing the Heavens want us to do. By all manner of means; this thing done, the Heavens will prosper all other things with us! Not a doubt of it -- provided your premise be not doubtful.

But now furthermore give me leave to ask: Whether the way of doing it is this somewhat surprising one, of trying to blockade the con-[p.538]tinent of Africa itself, and to watch slave-ships along the extremely extensive and unwholesome coast? The enterprise is very gigantic and proves hitherto as futile as any enterprise has lately done. Certain wise men once, before this, set about confining the cuckoo by a big circular wall; but they could not manage it! Watch the coast of Africa, good part of the coast of the terraqueous globe? And the living centers of this slave mischief, the live coal that produces all this world-wide smoke, it appears, lie simply in two points, Cuba and Brazil, *are* perfectly accessible and manageable. If the laws of Heaven do authorize you to keep the whole world in a pother about this question -- if you really appeal to the Almighty God upon it, and set common interests, and terrestrial considerations, and common sense, at defiance in behalf of it -- why, in Heaven's name, not go to Cuba and Brazil with a sufficiency of 74-gun ships, and signify to those nefarious countries, that their procedure on the negro question is too bad; that of all the solicisms now submitted to on earth, it is the most alarming and transcendent, and, in fact is such that a just man cannot follow his affairs any longer in the same planet with it; that they clearly will not, the nefarious populations will not, for love or fear, watching or entreaty, respect the rights of the negro enough; wherefore you here, with your seventy-fours. are come to be king over them, and will, on the spot, henceforth see for yourselves that they do it. Why not, if Heaven do send you? The thing can be done; easily. if you are sure of that proviso. It can be done, it is the way to "suppress the slave-trade;" and so far as yet appears, the one way.

Most thinking people! -- If hen-stealing prevail to a plainly unendurable extent. will you station police officers at every henroost; and keep them watching and cruising incessantly to and fro over the parish in the unwholesome dark, at enormous expense. with almost no effect; or will you not try rather to discover where the fox's den is, and kill the fox? Most thinking people, you know the fox and his den; there he is -- kill him, and discharge your cruisers and police-watchers! Oh. my friends, I feel there is an immense fund of human stupidity circulating among us, and much clogging our affairs for some time past! A certain man has called us, "of all peoples the wisest in action;" but, he added, "the

stupidest in speech:" and it is a sore thing, in these constitutional times, times mainly of universal parliamentary and other eloquence, that the "speakers" have all first to emit, in such tumultuous volumes, their human stupor, as the indispensable preliminary, and everywhere we must first see that and its results *out*, before beginning any business! -- *Explicit MS.*

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## Footnotes

\* - [p.529] Does any reader now remember it? A cloudy reminiscence of some such thing, and of noise in the newspapers upon it, remains with us -- fast hastening to abolition for every man. [[back](#)]

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§ - [Note on electronic text: as reprinted under the title "West India Emancipation" in *The Commercial Review of the South and West* (later *De Bow's Review*) (ed. J.D. De Bow, New Orleans ), June, 1850, Vol. VIII (Old Series), Vol. II, No.4 N.S., p.527-538. Available in [GIF format online](#) from the University of Michigan's "[Making of America](#)" Database.]