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THE ACQUISITION OF CUBA.

SPEECH OF HON. MR. BENJAMIN,

OF LOUISIANA.

Mr. BENJAMIN said: The subject under debate, Mr. President, involves considerations so numerous, grows under investigation to such vast proportions, as to render it a matter of exceeding difficulty to confine its discussion within reasonable limits. Some of the topics which I would desire to treat must be presented in general outline; others must be reluctantly abandoned; none can be treated with a fulness of detail at all commensurate with their importance.

An intertropical island whose external commerce reaches nearly eighty million dollars lies at our doors. In territorial extent equal to four or five of our smaller States, with a population that would make it fifth in rank in our confederacy; with harbors unrivalled for capacity and security, it is an object of absorbing interest to the American people. Its present condition and future destiny offer a legitimate field for the exercise of the best statesmanship of the republic.

The first leading fact, which ought to be kept constantly in view by all who would form just conceptions on this subject, is, that the wealth and productiveness of this island have been created, and their continuance can only be secured, by a system of compulsory labor. If the experience of mankind has solved a single industrial problem, we may fairly assume as granted that tropical productions can be maintained, on a scale to meet the requirements of civilized man, by compulsory labor alone. The fruits of the slave labor of the southern States, of the Spanish islands of Cuba and Porto Rico, and of the Brazilian empire, immeasurably exceed in value similar products of the other States and countries of this hemisphere, of like soil and climate, cultivated by free labor.

If we descend to particular examples, compare the Hayti of to-day with the St. Domingo of colonial history. The colony, in 1790, exported more sugar than all the British colonies combined, besides enormous quantities of coffee, cotton, indigo, and cocoa. With free labor, Hayti is no longer mentioned in the commercial statistics of the world. If, however, this be considered an unfair example; if it be objected that the wealth and prosperity of this once favored isle were utterly destroyed by the bloody horrors of its revolution, take other and still more striking examples. Place in contrast the annual addition to the wealth and comfort of mankind afforded by the slave labor of Cuba with that furnished by the islands in which England, France, and Holland have made their ruinous emancipation experiments. The former alone, in spite of its wretched misgovernment, of odious monopolies, of commercial restrictions, of all the drawbacks of the old, exploded colonial system, exceeds in wealth and population all the English, French, and Dutch West India colonies put together, even if we add to them the *terra firma* colonies of Guiana. As this consideration controls largely the train of argument into which I desire to enter, permit me to dwell on it a little more fully.

For a long series of years after the English emancipation experiment, the disastrous effects were attributed by its authors to every cause which human ingenuity could suggest, except their own folly. They would open their eyes to no fact. It is no unprofitable study for the statesman to mark the obstinate tenacity with which these theorists persistently refused to receive the teachings of daily experience, till at last a generation has passed away; the truth has become patent to the world; and British statesmen are now found who openly avow the necessity of encouraging the emigration from their colonies of the white population, and leaving these once flourishing settlements to the uncontrolled occupancy of the blacks.

In 1842, just four years after the final liberation of the slaves in the colonies, the Earl of Derby, then as Lord Stanley, colonial secretary, who was urging upon Spain the adoption of the same system for her own colonies, replied to her challenge to prove the advantages of freedom, by stating, as "unquestionable facts, on which all men are agreed," namely:

"That since the emancipation the negroes have been thriving and comfortable; that they have raised their manner of living, and multiplied their comforts and enjoyments; that their offences against the laws have become more and more light and unfrequent; that their morals have improved; that marriage has been more and more substituted for concubinage; and that they are eager for education, rapidly advancing in knowledge, and powerfully influenced by the ministers of religion."

In 1848, fourteen years after the original emancipation act, ten years after the final liberation of the negroes, Sir Charles Grey, who was then governor of Jamaica, wrote to the home government:

"Under a system of perfectly fair dealing, and of real justice, they (the negroes) will come to be an admirable peasantry and yeomanry, able-bodied, industrious, and hard working, frank, and well disposed."

This ridiculous statement, absurd as it seems to us now, was met at that time by the candid and judicious criticism afforded by the more frank expositions of the conditions of the colonies made by other British governors. Governor Barkly, who was governor of British Guiana, made his report on the condition of that colony about the same time—I read it from the British Parliamentary Papers. He says:

"I cannot pass by Mr. Walker's concluding observations as to the condition and character of the laboring population without dwelling for a moment upon the cheerless picture which they exhibit as the sequel of ten years of liberty. I confess that the tracts of land grown up in rank vegetation, instead of canes or coffee bushes, the broken down bridges, and impassable roads, which I encounter in my daily rides, strike me with far less apprehension for the future destiny of British Guiana than the apparent retrogression exhibited in these authentic annals of the emancipated peasantry."

He has just been alluding to the criminal excesses and outbreaks of the negroes; to the murders of watchmen on the plantations; to the incendiarism of the plantation buildings. He refers to the statistics of the jails, showing they are becoming full of convicts for crimes like these. He says:

"True, we ought to remember that less than fifteen years have elapsed since they were slaves, subject to the most unfavorable influences; but how much better must it not have been for them selves if that fact had been borne in mind then, instead of now!"

The statement annexed to this despatch was as follows:

"The increase of crime, more particularly perhaps remarkable in the counties of Demerara and Essequibo, is a fact which, to a greater or lesser extent, is borne out by the opinions of the stipendiary magistrates, although I do not think, looking at the mere numerical proportion, that it is conclusively to be derived from such prison returns as have come under my notice. For the most part the magistrates hesitate to assign any specific cause for this unpleasant feature. I greatly fear it must be ascribed to the idleness of a large portion of the able-bodied peasantry for many months, induced by their determination not to accept of reduced wages for the same amount of labor. For some time, no doubt, they had the means of subsistence at their command, partly from savings of previously earned wages, partly from other resources, such as fishing, shooting, the produce of their provision grounds, &c.; but, when these began to fail, the want of regular occupation produced its usual effect upon minds so unstayed; the plunder of plantain walks and cane pieces was resorted to; and, at length, whenever it was known or suspected that money was to be had, its acquisition was resolved upon at all hazards. Within the last few months, I believe, no fewer than four brutal murders of watchmen upon plantations have occurred; robberies upon the highway, as well as attacks upon dwelling houses, have been frequent, and assassinations have been not only attempted, but, in broad daylight, successfully perpetrated."

He says further, speaking of the emancipated population:

"Nor is the charge less striking, it may be here remarked, in regard to their addiction to costly clothing and expensive articles of food; matters which, once anxiously sought after, are now regarded with comparative indifference; and this is a circumstance which, affecting a very large body of consumers, is not without its influence upon the commercial transaction of the colony. Hence, probably, may arise the little effort produced upon them by diminution of wages or restriction of employment. Instead of inducing more strenuous exertions to reap the same amount of reward as before, they are rather content to circumscribe their enjoyments, and, instead of striving to make progress in habits of civilization, prefer to fall back upon a retrograde path. The fact of the continued prevalence and undiminished influence of the practice of obeah in this and other colonies will partially illustrate the slow progress of intellectual improvement amongst them; and there seems to be a general impression that the rising generation are less docile and more inclined to evil and reckless pursuits than their elders."

Earl Grey, in the same year, commenting on the general despatches received from the West India colonies, writes from London to the following effect. His despatch is dated June 4, 1859:

"I have read this despatch and its enclosures with feelings of great pain, and of much anxiety for the future, since the picture you have presented to me of the present state of society in Guiana, and of the actual condition and prospects of all classes of its inhabitants, is gloomy in the extreme, and yet it bears too obviously the character of truth for me to doubt its accuracy. It is, indeed, most melancholy to learn that while the difficulties of the planters have continued, since the abolition of slavery, to become more and more severe, until now the ruin appears to be almost complete, and the depreciation of property, once of such great value, has reached a point which has involved in the deepest distress great numbers of persons, both in this country and in the colony, at the same time the negroes, instead of having made a great advance in civilization, as might have been hoped, during the fifteen years which have elapsed since their emancipation, have, on the contrary, rather retrograded than improved, and that they are now, as a body, less amenable than they were when that great change took place to the restraints of religion and of law, less docile and tractable, and almost as ignorant, and as much subject as ever to the degrading superstition which their fathers brought with them from Africa."

That was the result of fifteen years of experiment. Still, however, British emancipationists, Exeter Hall philanthropists, continued declaring that this was a mere temporary passage from the one system to the other; that this temporary state of things could not endure, and that the negroes would soon improve. In 1850, the editor of a New York journal, hostile to slavery, made a visit to Jamaica. I hold his work in my hand, giving a picture of the condition of the island as he found it then—he an advocate for the emancipation scheme. He says:

"It is difficult to exaggerate, and yet more difficult to define, the poverty and industrial prostration of Jamaica. The natural wealth and spontaneous productiveness of the island are so great that no one can starve, and yet it seems as if the faculty of accumulation was suspended. All the productive power of the soil is running to waste; the finest land in the world may be had at any price, and almost for the asking; labor receives no compensation, and the product of labor does not seem to know the way to market. Families accustomed to every wealth and luxury have witnessed the decline of their incomes, until now, with undiminished estates, they find themselves wrestling with poverty for the commonest necessaries of life. There are no public amusements here of any kind, for amusements are purchased with the surplus wealth of a people, and here there is no surplus. There was not a theatre, or a museum, or a circus, or any other place of entertainment involving expense, open during my stay on the island. The corporation of Kingston owns a building which has been used as a theatre, and in the suburbs of the city is a plain once famous as a race course; but of the first, rats and spiders are the only tenants, and weeds and underwood have overgrown the other."

(*Hogeboom's Jamaica in 1850*, page 53.

This is the testimony of a friend of the scheme in 1850. But, sir, I have nowhere seen the true condition of the island of Jamaica, under the operation of the British system of free labor for the production of tropical products, better illustrated than in the official reports from the island itself. It is scarcely credible that such a picture as I am about to read should have been issued by a report of the central board of health of Jamaica in the year 1842:

"Yards" * * * "which, after a rain, send forth streams of the most horrible description; numbers of dilapidated and falling houses, useless for all habitable purposes; ruined walls and remnants of fences, together with unincloses sites of pulled-down houses, covered with filth and brush, complete the scene of every old Jamaica township, and the out-skirts of the new."

"In villages, and on small settlements, the huts or dwellings of the laborers are composed chiefly of mud walls, sometimes of wattles, plastered with the same." * * * * "In very few cases are they raised off the ground, nor are they floored in any way." * * * * "Ventilation, or the admission of fresh air, is almost invariably neglected."

"These small, dark, unventilated houses are frequently overcrowded, especially at night; within the small space of a few square feet perhaps on the bare ground, or may be on a mattress or mat, or in some cases on a bed, with a whole family of eight or nine persons of all ages, and of both sexes, huddled together with the door and so called window closed; all clad in the same clothes which they wore through the day, with children sleeping on mattresses, often soaked and half rotted with urine and other secretions. Should there accidentally be a hole or crevice, this is immediately closed up by means of rags or something of that kind. The rush of odors on opening such a place must be experienced to be understood.

"As regards water for domestic purposes, it is very much to be feared that a large portion of our poor population seldom think of that. Their persons are never ablluted, save in crossing a river, or being exposed to a heavy shower of rain.

"Among the lower classes the majority, not being compelled by circumstances to be field laborers, are too lazy to move; they frequently squat down all day in a sort of sullen apathy; they eat, and drink, and sleep like the brute that perisheth; but all the more active impulses of their human nature appear to be as little excited as if they were lotally wanting."

"It is a well known fact, that all the towns and villages contain a large number of persons who have no ostensible means of earning their livelihood; the way in which they subsist is an enigma to themselves and others. Exposure to the night air is very prevalent among the lower classes, under various excuses they meet in numbers, frequently in the open air, or under temporary sheds, or at the performance of wakes or rhe dical, and also at their revels at John-canoeing, as it is termed, at Christmas time; on these or other occasions of the kind, they give full scope to animal enjoyment; and at the pitch of the excitement of the prevailing passions their gestures and acts resemble more those of demons than of human beings."

English authors and statesmen, however, still continued to speak encouragingly, to profess confidence in eventual results, until the testimony collected by the House of Commons' committee, in 1853, put an end to all possibility of denial, and the ruin of the colony is finally admitted to be complete and hopeless.

A single extract from the testimony must suffice. Captain Hamilton, of the royal navy, in the course of his examination had declared that the island of Jamaica was a desert. Here follows his examination by the members of the committee.

"*Chairman.* You made use of a phrase some time ago with respect to Jamaica having become a desert. Will you explain to what extent you apply that term?

"*Captain Hamilton.* I mean that, in going to plantation establishments that had evidently been once splendid buildings, where there had been a great outlay of capital on a grand scale, you find the roofs tumbling in, the places deserted, nobody in them, grass growing in the rooms, and perhaps rats and snakes in those very rooms, and a deserted, melancholy appearance, that certainly goes to one's heart to view.

"*Chairman.* Is that applicable to only one part, or is it the general character?

"*Captain Hamilton.* It is the general character.

"*Mr. Bright.* That is not the case in Jamaica, but in those particular locations?

"*Captain Hamilton.* No; the general character of Jamaica is that it gives you the impression of a place going to decay. Speaking of the population of Jamaica, I do not refer to the capitalist planters of old times, but to the present population of Jamaica, and their locations and cultivations.

"*Mr. Bright.* Do you think the term 'desert' was quite applicable to the state of things there?

"*Capt. Hamilton.* I should say peculiarly applicable without any exaggeration."

Now, Mr. President, the effect produced upon the British mind by evidences such as this may be best gathered by an extract from the organ of the ablest, perhaps, of living British statesmen. In the London Morning Herald of the 8th September, 1855, the admission is at length thus made to the world:

"We have of late, as occasion served, directed the attention of our readers to the condition of the most valuable of our West India possessions, and have endeavored to trace to its true source, in a vicious and mistaken policy, the ruin which not only impends, but has actually fallen, upon those islands, once the boast and glory of the British crown, now the by-word of the commercial nations of the earth. Made by nature the richest of these dependencies, it reduced itself to of collapse, from which recovery seems to be hopeless. Efforts have been made to stimulate once more her industry, to raise her crushed proprietary, and to give them once again opportunity and hope. So far those efforts have not been successful. In the recent advices, we can perceive no symptoms of amendment; on the contrary, the downward tendency of affairs continues, as if, for the unhappy Jamaicans, there is a lower deep yet yawning, which, threatening, opens to devour, and from whose frightful vortex there seems to be no hope of escape."

* * * * *

"Although the ruin of Jamaica has been more rapid and irretrievable than any of the other islands, desolation rests upon the entire archipelago, and sooner or later will involve them all."

And, Mr. President, so far from this state of things being now contested in Great Britain, the same people who made this experiment, and who, by their folly and blindness, reduced these once flourishing colonies to such a state of destitution and distress; the same people now, when it is too late to remedy the evil, deliberately propose to withdraw the entire white population from the island and to leave Jamaica in the possession of the blacks—a second Hayti. Here is the Westminister Review, for April, 1853. I call the attention of the senator from Wisconsin [Mr. DOOLITTLE] to the extract I am about to read; it chimes in perfectly with his views. He will find here a coagenial spirit; a spirit that is ready to drive the white population from the cultivation of the entire tropics, and leave them to the british blacks that now infest the islands that have been abandoned to their sway. But, sir, when he has carried out his scheme, I advise him to seek counsel from the British writer, and get, as he recommends, American free negroes to go to teach British, and Spanish, and Dutch free negroes industry and energy. Here is the Westminster Review. It appeals to the free colored people of the United States, and speaks to them as "brethren:"

"It is not for us to mark out for them their course; and yet we cannot but think that by no possible means could they so effectually aid the American slaves, as by teaching energy and industry to the free British negro."

Again proceeds the Review:

"By hastening forward, by their precept and example, that time when from Jamaica and her kindred isles, the voice of a negro community, prosperous, educated, civilized, Christian, shall speak to republican despots and their victims words which both will hear, and which the former will not be able to disregard."

"And that this time will come, we hold to be no vain prophecy, foolish as to many it may seem."

The writer appears to have had a prescient self-consciousness:

"We have faith in it, because we see it written in the page of history—*it is the experience of the Anglo-Saxon—that he cannot but in time make lands, or make a home of them, and of the Africans that he can.*"

I say then, Mr. President, that the evidences which I have thus hastily collected, and of which innumerable other instances might be given, prove the proposition with which I started——

Mr. DOOLITTLE. Will the senator allow me a moment?

Mr. BENJAMIN. With pleasure.

Mr. DOOLITTLE. I do not desire at all to interrupt him in the course of his remarks; but on some proper occasion before this question shall pass from the consideration of the Senate, I will take occasion to express my views, and state wherein, and to what extent, the senator understands them, and how far he misunderstands the positions which I took.

Mr. BENJAMIN. I shall be very happy to be informed that I have misunderstood the proposition of the senator from Wisconsin; for as it is stated in his substitute, now upon our table, for the bill before the Senate, it struck me as a proposition so monstrous that I could hardly reconcile myself to the evidence of my senses when I saw it proposed by an American senator. I repeat, then, Mr. President, that the population, wealth, and prosperity, of Cuba, are dependent solely on a supply of compulsory labor, without which she must inevitably relapse into the condition of Hayti, Jamaica, and the other West India colonies.

I now proceed to inquire from what sources an adequate supply of this compulsory labor can be obtained. I know, sir, of but three possible methods:

1. The actual increase of the slaves already there.

2. The introduction of persons bound to service under the name of apprentices, or coolies, or colonists.

3. The African slave trade, which is the present method.

A hasty glance must suffice for each.

1. The continued supply of labor in Cuba by natural increase is impossible. It is a well authenticated fact that its whole laboring population is exhausted in a single generation. Horrible as is the contemplation of such a fact, the evidence in support of it is irresistible. None of the writers on the population of Cuba fix the number of its creole—*id est*, native—negroes outside of Havana at more than ten per cent., whilst a recent authority on the island, perfectly competent to judge, fixes it at only five per cent. We have, then, the fact that ninety to ninety-five per cent. of the slaves engaged in agriculture were imported Africans.

Nor will this statement appear surprising, when we reflect on the fact that the importations of slaves are almost exclusively males, not over one in six or seven being females. The British reviewer, already quoted, thinks that the average working life of the imported slave is only seven years; but I prefer what is evidently more authentic, that is the declaration of the captain-general of Cuba himself. In an address to the people of Cuba, urging on them a change of their system of labor, the Marquis of Pezuela laid stress on the fact that the present wealth in slaves was but transitory, inasmuch as it "perished in a single generation." The statistics in the report of my colleague, startling in the extreme, prove this conclusion.

2. Is this problem of a supply of labor for tropical colonies capable of solution by the introduction of apprentices, immigrants, coolies, or any other of the modern expedients devised in order to avoid a return to the slave trade? This question, too, must be answered in the negative; and here again I can but glance at the proof. The difficulty is to select from the number. Out of four thousand five hundred coolies imported into Jamaica, in 1846 and 1847, only one half *remained alive* in 1851, and these were wandering about half naked and half starved, living in way-side ditches and dens in the towns, infecting the negroes with their illeness, profligacy, and paganism; until, in 1851, we find that out of the whole number imported there was scarcely one half alive.

The statistics contained in my colleague's report show twenty-eight thousand seven hundred and seventy-seven coolies shipped for Cuba from 1847 to 23d March, 1858. Of these, more than four thousand died on the passage. Of those that arrive, I am assured by a recent traveller that the annual deaths are at least ten per cent.; to use his own words, "they are considered as raw material to be worked up into sugar." If we reflect that the engagements are for ten years; that of their miserable pay of four dollars per month, one-half is returned under the terms of their contract, *to be paid at the conclusion of their engagement—id est:* at the end of ten years—the truth of this horrible statement, that they are "worked up as raw material," becomes apparent, and its motive equally obvious. *The coolie must not be alive at the end of ten years;* there would be due him $240; and a new one, a fresh worker, could be bought for $100, instead of the miserable Asiatic, worn out, decrepit, dying, valueless as "raw material."

So much for the coolies. What becomes of the African apprentices?

This new form of slave trade was first devised by England. In 1851 authority was sent from the colonial office to the governor of Sierra Leone to send out colonists, as they were termed, to the West Indies. A contract was made with an English firm—Hythe, Hodge, & Co.—by the British government for the exportation of a large number of these colonists. Thirty-five or forty thousand were actually exported. How were they obtained? The first thing heard of them was a proclamation by Gov. Roberts, of Liberia, stating that the contractors were *buying* up their *colonists* at ten dollars a head, being nearly the same price that slaves were bought for under the old *régime* of the slave trade. The same reviewer already quoted fairly admits that the *colonists* were bought, and that none could be obtained voluntarily:

"Why not, then, import free immigrants from Africa? Poor, miserable heathen! What a good thing it would be to convert them to Christianity, always supposing that they did not first convert back the creoles to Fetichism; and then you might get any number of them, and fill the labor market as full as you pleased! There was only one objection to this plan, and that was that though Africans might be *bought* to any amount, yet, when free, they would not come."

So that scheme failed for the British West Indies. Great Britain was absolutely shamed into abandoning it, after thirty-five or forty thousand miserable Africans had been bought and sold into slavery under her flag, all in the desperate effort to repair the results of her own madness and folly.

But, sir, an example has been given by which France was not slow to profit. Her colonies, too, are perishing, and crying out that, without compulsory labor, they must languish; and languishing, must die. So the French, after bestowing freedom in their colonies on those who were born slaves, are now making compensation for their error by enslaving men who were born free. In spite of the outcry of the British press, slaves, by tens of thousands, are now being poured annually by the French Emperor into his colonies; the regis contract is in full force; the unhappy victims rise on their oppressors, and the journals of the day are filled with accounts of captains and crews attacked by their coolie or African *apprentices*. The Emperor, with high-handed violence, abuses the weakness of Portugal because she interferes with the slave trade in her own colonies; and the last news from the French Antilles is, that in addition to twelve thousand coolies and Africans imported into Martinique and Guadaloupe for 1853, provision has recently been made for eighteen thousand more of the "raw material," to wit: seven thousand Africans under the Regis contract, and eleven thousand coolies. The contract of these unfortunate wretches is published in the papers of the day; and is justly characterized, by an eminent New York journalist, as a receipt for killing the greatest number of laborers in the shortest time. The wages are about nine cents a day for men, four for women, and two for children up to the age of fourteen years; out of which they are to pay for their own clothing, and the expenses of their own sickness; and a reservation of ten per cent. monthly is to be made for the expenses of returning them home at the end of the contract. To this complexion has come at last the emancipation of slaves in the colonies! Compare it, on I compare it, senators, with the well-fed, well-lodged, well clothed, and carefully tended laborers of the South, and say, in the name of a common humanity, which of these two systems is preferable?

I affirm, then, Mr. President, that this magnificent fabric, built up by the slave labor of Cuba, must perish, or must, whilst Cuba is a Spanish colony, be sustained by the slave trade; a trade branded as piracy by her own laws, by ours, by those of Great Britain; forbidden to her by treaty voluntarily made by Spain; forbidden by our treaty with England; and which, by the treaties of the three nations, each is solemnly bound to prevent. The last refuge on earth for this trade is now found in the island of Cuba. The combined power of England and the United States is now exerted at the cost of nearly six millions per annum in the suppression of this traffic. Its continuance has, on more than one occasion, brought us to the very verge of hostilities with Great Britain for the protection of our flag, and yet tens of thousands of slaves are annually imported into Cuba, and the common voice of civilized nations sustains the charge that this is done with the connivance of her colonial authorities, and to their immense pecuniary advantage.

I say, then, Mr. President, that unless we are to agree that the supply of labor shall be kept up by the continuation of the African slave trade, a continuation now going on, according to the language of Lord Clarendon himself, by a "felonious violation" by Spain of her treaties with England; unless we agree that that felonious violation of the public law shall still continue, there is but one resort: Cuba must perish, as San Domingo and Jamaica have perished before her, or she must no longer remain Spanish. If annexed to our country, the system now prevalent under which her entire agricultural population perishes in a generation would, by the force of interest and example, be exchanged for ours, under which the southern laborers are more than doubled in the same lapse of time.

I have thus far spoken, sir, of the beneficial results to humanity arising from the acquisition of Cuba, in the double aspect of the preservation of the island from a lapse into the barbarism and savage state of the other Antilles, and of regard for its miserable laboring population. What would be its effects on the superior race—on the white natives of the island, now numbering nearly three quarters of a million?

In spite of *pro forma* petitions recently forwarded from Havana, under the orders of the captain-general, the ardent aspirations of the Cubans for release from the grinding tyranny under which they languish are too well known for concealment. I will not appeal to a knowledge personal to us all; I will not rely on the fact that, amongst the numerous Cubans with whom I have opportunity of conversing on the subject, I never yet have found one—no, not one—who did not pant for the hour of freedom, who was not ready to strike for his liberty if the remotest prospect of succor could be held out to him. I will appeal to history, and leave its teachings to the appreciation of a candid world. My sketch must be rapid.

At the close of the last, and the commencement of the present century, Cuba was prosperous and happy. Subjected to a colonial system identical with that then generally prevalent amongst civilized nations, if her commerce was restricted by the monopoly established in favor of the mother country, her own internal administration was conducted by wise rulers, guided by paternal interest in her welfare. She shared the political benefits conquered by the Spanish people, and when the constitution of 1812 was established, Cuba reaped its advantages. When, on the death of Ferdinand the VII, Queen Christiana threw herself into the arms of the liberal party in order to insure the triumph of Queen Isabella over the pretensions of Don Carlos, the royal statute was proclaimed in both Spain and Cuba, and the latter was represented in the national Congress and enjoyed the liberties accorded by that celebrated document to the mother country. Under its provisions, the Junta de Fomento was established in Havana, with branches in all the principal cities of the island. When, in 1836, the revolution of La Granja placed the party of the Progressistas in power, subverted the royal statute and proclaimed the old constitution of 1812, the Queen Mother, then Regent, in convoking the Cortes included the deputies from Cuba in the call.

In the mean time, however, the example of the other Spanish-American colonies, which had succeeded in establishing their independence, had not been without its effects on Cuba. In 1825 the liberator, Bolivar, offered to aid the patriots by an invasion of the island. Numerous societies were formed under the title of the "Soles de Bolivar," and everything was prepared for seconding the invasion, which might very possibly have proved successful but for the intervention of our own government, which dismaled the invasion. (See letters of Mr. Clay to the ministers of Columbia and Mexico, December 20, 1825.) The knowledge of this effervescence of the public mind induced, on the part of the Spanish King, one of the most extraordinary acts which ever emanated from a despot. He gave the captain-general, by an ordinance of the 28th of May, 1825, all the powers granted to the governors of besieged towns; or, in other words, declared the whole island under *martial law*, with full power in the captain-general over the lives, fortunes, and liberties of the people, and with the right of suspending all laws and royal decrees at his pleasure.

This would appear scarcely credible; but I desire to read a passage from this ordinance of 1825 of the Spanish King. I find it fortunately translated here in a little book called "Cuba and the Cubans;" which I would recommend to the perusal of gentlemen who may desire some additional facts in relation to the condition of the island:

"On the 28th of May, 1825, the royal ordinance, addressed to the Captain General of Cuba, declares: 'It has pleased his Majesty, in conformity with the advice of his ministers, to authorize your excellency, fully investing you with the whole extent of power which by royal ordinances is granted *to the governors of besieged towns*; in consequence thereof, his Majesty most amply and unrestrictedly authorizes your excellency not only to remove from the island such persons holding office from the government or not, whatever their occupation, work, class, or situation in life may be, whose residence there you may believe to be prejudicial, or whose public or private conduct *may appear suspicious to you*, employing in their stead faithful servants of his Majesty. Also, to *suspend the execution of whatever royal orders or general decrees in all the different branches of the administration, or in any part of them, as your excellency may think convenient, the royal service.*'"

We are told that under this system of government the whites are contented. Why, sir, independent of the conspiracies of which I have spoken, in 1823-'24 and 1825, again in 1826 another conspiracy broke out, and its chiefs were arrested, and Sanchez and Aguerro were executed at Port-au-Prince; and again, at a later day, the conspiracy called the conspiracy of the Black Eagle broke out, and was again repressed, and those engaged in it executed or exiled or imprisoned. The different conspiracies that have existed of late years are familiar to us all; the various expeditions of Lopez and his companions; and the last of which I have any memory, or, at least, authentic detail, is that of 1851, when a few Cuban patriots, worn-out, disappointed refugees, still had courage to meet together on the 4th of July, 1851, and declared the independence of Cuba. Here is their declaration of independence. I am going to refer to this, not so much for the purpose of showing this fact, not so much for the purpose of calling attention to the signatures, including names of this same family of Aguerro, that seems to have distinguished itself in behalf of the liberties of their country, but because there is a list of grievances in this declaration of independence to which I now desire to call the attention of the Senate, and which I will lay before it, asking every man who hears it, if it be possible that human beings subjected to grievances like these can be content, can be willing to kiss the rod which smites them?

They begin, sir, by stating the horrible cruelties that are exercised upon them. It is in Spanish; I will read it as well as I can; it will be probably somewhat imperfect in the translation. They state that they supposed the world would refuse credence to the history of the horrible iniquities which have been perpetrated in Cuba, and would consider, with reason, perhaps, that if there existed monsters capable of committing them, it is not conceivable that there should exist men who for so long a time had submitted to them; but it those persons are few who reach the truth of particular facts, by reason of the means of which the government disposes to obscure and disfigure them, nobody can resist the evidence of acts that are public and official. Therefore, they go on to relate: it was publicly, and with arms in his hands, that General Tacon despoiled the island of Cuba of the constitution of Spain, proclaimed by all the powers of the monarchy, and which these powers had ordered to be sworn to as the fundamental law of the entire monarchy. It was publicly, and by the act of the courts, that Cuba was declared to be deprived of the rights which all Spaniards enjoyed, and which are naturally conceded to persons the least civilized. It was publicly that the decree was issued which deprived the sons of Cuba of all right of being chosen to occupy public offices, or of employment in the State. It was publicly that *omni modoi* faculties were granted to the captains general of Cuba, who may deny to those whom they desire to have punished or sentenced by the tribunals even the form of a trial before the courts.

Publicly prominent, in the island of Cuba, are still those military commissions which, in other countries, the law permits only in extraordinary cases during time of war, and then only for offences against the State. Publicly has the Spanish press threatened Cuba with tearing from it the property in its slaves, of converting the island into ruin and ashes, and of disenchaining against it all the hordes of barbarous Africans which now exist within it. Public is the continual increase of the army and the creation of new mercenary bodies, which, under pretext of public security, are only put upon us for the purpose of augmenting the burdens that lie upon Cuba, and of exercising, with greater vexation, the system of subordination and espionage over its inhabitants. Public are the obstacles and difficulties which are placed in the way of each individual for moving, for exercising any industry; nobody being sure that he will not be seized and fined, by reason of some defect of authorization, or want of license, at every step that he makes in the island. Public are the contributions which are exhausting the island of Cuba, and the projects of other contributions which are threatened, and which are to absorb all the products of its riches, there remaining nothing to the miserable inhabitants but the pain of labor. Public are the exactions of all kinds which inferior officers impose on its inhabitants, with the greatest disregard to the opinion of mankind.

This ordinance, sir, has never been repealed. It is, to the present hour, in force in Cuba.

I return now, sir, to the year 1836, when the Cuban deputies were convoked to the meeting of the constituent Cortes at Madrid. The Cortes assembled in 1837, but the Cuban deputies were not admitted to their seats. Cuba was deprived of her representation; nor was this the only outrage inflicted on her rights. It was decided that she should be governed in the future by exceptional laws, and not by the laws common to the rest of the monarchy. These special laws were never passed; and it is thus that she has remained ever since a helpless victim, subject to the despotic control of a single man, the extent of whose powers can only be described by the word invented to express them, *omni-modos*, of all kinds.

Ever since this monstrous system has been adopted, Cuba has not been blessed with one hour of peace. Constantly repeated have been her efforts to shake off the yoke under which they groan. But all in vain. Twenty thousand bayonets on the land, and a powerful fleet on its coasts, keep the dread watch of the tyrant, and suppress the first symptoms of revolt. The whites have been disarmed, and four companies of colored men have been added to each of the sixteen regiments of peninsular troops stationed on the island; thus holding before the unfortunate inhabitants the constant threat of a war of races, a renewal of the horrors of St. Domingo. The pride of race has been shocked by a governor's decree authorizing marriages between the two races, except when one of the parties is a noble.

The army is maintained faithful solely by a rigorous isolation, all communication between the inhabitants and troops being interdicted. No security for life, person, or liberty, against the caprice of a despot; no arms for self-defence, the size of a walking-stick, even, being limited to dimensions small enough to pass through a ring furnished the policemen. Such is the sad, the dreadful condition of the unfortunate islanders who are represented by the official press as hastening to lay at the feet of the Queen ardent professions of loyalty to her government, and attachment to her person. They have again and again made heavy sacrifices for freedom—nay, at this very moment, and for years past, they maintain, by secret contributions, for gratuitous circulation, public journals in the United States, repeating their constant appeal to our sympathies.

The whole of the recent wrongs committed, Mr. President, in relation to the arming of the blacks and other similar outrages were committed under the instigation of Great Britain, and Lord Palmerston did not blush to acknowledge his guilt in the face of the civilized world. I have here his despatch, in which, in answer to the remonstrance of the inhabitants of the island, communicated to him through the correspondence of the Spanish minister, he replied, to the effect, that it was true that the measures he was recommending might not be suitable for the whites, but that they were exceedingly beneficial to the blacks. An actual recommendation to the Spanish government to trample the white native Cuban under foot for the benefit of the Africans that had been imported in defiance of the treaties with Great Britain herself. Here is Lord Palmerston's despatch of September 11, 1851, and it is capable of that signification alone:

"With reference to that passage in M. Miraflores's note, in which he states that the Spanish government cannot understand how her Majesty's government can seriously recommend a measure which would prove very injurious to the natives of Cuba, when they also recommend that the Spanish government should conciliate the affections of those Cubans, I have to instruct your lordship to observe to M. de Miraflores that the slave of Cuba form a large portion, and by no means an unimportant one, of the population of Cuba; and that any steps taken to provide for their emancipation would, therefore, as far as the black population are concerned, be quite in unison with the recommendation made by her Majesty's government; that measures should be adopted for contenting the people of Cuba, with a view to secure the connection between that island and the Spanish crown; and it must be evident that, if the negro population of Cuba were rendered free, that fact would create a most powerful element of resistance to any scheme for annexing Cuba to the United States, where slavery still exists."

There it is, sir. It is the white population that is to be trampled under the feet of the blacks, and such blacks as now exist in Jamaica; it is this white population, that is represented in the face of the Senate and the country as desirous of continuing subjects of the rule under which they now groan. Sir, it is very easy to say, "if the people of Cuba desire emancipation from this tyranny, why do they not rise in arms?" And we are pointed to our own condition when our forefathers resisted the tyranny of the British Crown. How unfair to them; how delusive the comparison! We were three millions of men. We had the right of speech; the liberty of the press. We could assemble, combine, prepare. We could arm. We had a right to buy arms, and to wear them. When Patrick Henry was urging the Virginia assembly to the declaration of American independence, his cry was that three million men in arms could not be vanquished by any power that one enemy could send against us. But how is the case of the miserable Cubans? Had we, as they have, a foreign army in our midst—an army composed of soldiers whose fidelity to the mother country is only secured by the system already mentioned, of strict isolation, of absolute interdiction from any communication with the inhabitants of the island—had we such a force as that amongst us, and backed by the bayonets of the black race threatening exterminating war of races? No, sir; there is no fairness, no justice in the reproach.

I must waive, Mr. President, all discussion of the effects that the acquisition of this island would have on the industrial, agricultural, and commercial interests of our country, these points having been already treated very satisfactorily by gentlemen who have already spoken.

I shall not even speak of its geographical position, commanding, as it does, a commerce which, before all that are now within sound of my voice shall have disappeared from the earth, will reach $1,500,000,000, still I must call attention to the fact that it seems hitherto to have been taken for granted that this country is exposed to no risk so long as this island remains within the feeble grasp of Spain. I apprehend this is a mistake, and a very grave mistake. It is a grave mistake for several reasons; first, because those harbors, being the most capacious and the best fortified in the Gulf, offer a secure rendezvous, in case of difficulties with other foreign powers, for collecting of fleets and navies with which our own unprotected coasts could be attacked; secondly, because Spain is not now an independent nation.

I deny her independence in the true sense of the word. Spain has bartered away her sovereignty in Cuba, effectually bartered it away to Great Britain. She did not yield to motives of policy or philanthropy in abolishing the slave trade. There was a time when Spanish dignity was not insulted by the offer to buy something from her, and her pride was not touched when Great