

agitation against it had been going on for many years. But the West Indian planters refused to take the matter seriously, and scouted several proposals made to them for the gradual abolition of slavery, and even for its amelioration in details. Their uncompromising opposition to change of any kind only made their fate come upon them the more swiftly and surely. In spite of their angry clamour, a bill was passed by which all slaves were made free, though they were bound as apprentices to their former owners for three years, in order to tide over the general breaking up of social institutions which must follow emancipation. As was but just, the planters were given compensation, a sum of £20,000,000 being voted to them in the proportion of £22 10s. for every man, woman, and child set free (August 1, 1834).

The emancipation of the negroes was an absolutely necessary act of elementary morality. Nothing could justify the survival of slavery far into the nineteenth century. But from the point of view of the prosperity of the West Indies, the change brought disastrous results.

Effects of abolition on the West Indies. The freed men were idle and disorderly; when the fear of the lash was removed, they did not take kindly to work. The sugar plantations of the West Indies have been gradually ruined by inefficient free labour, which cannot face foreign competition. In the first seven years after the abolition of slavery, the production of sugar fell off by more than a third, and that of coffee by nearly a half. Chinese and Hindoo coolies have been introduced to provide the plantation-labour which the free black refuses to carry on systematically. But no expedient has availed to save the West India planters from ruin, which has been almost completed in our own days by the iniquitous bounties on beet-sugar paid by France and other continental states. Till they are in some way removed or countervailed, it does not seem that prosperity can ever return to the West India Islands.

The main trouble which the Grey cabinet endured in their

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