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SLAVE TRADE. No. 3 (1882).

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REPORT

BY

ACTING CONSUL-GENERAL CARDEN

ON THE

NUMBER AND CONDITION OF THE SLAVES IN CUBA.

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*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.*  
1882.

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## Report by Acting Consul-General Carden on the Number and Condition of the Slaves in Cuba.

No. 1.

*Mr. Lister to Consul-General Crowe.*

Sir,

*Foreign Office, February 24, 1882.*

I AM directed by Earl Granville to instruct you to furnish his Lordship with a short Report, for presentation to Parliament, on the number and condition of the slaves in Cuba whose emancipation was decreed by the Spanish Government in the year 1880; also showing how far the terms of the "Moret" Law regulating that prospective emancipation have been, and are being, carried out.

Your Report should further include a statement as to the number and condition of the Chinese coolies in Cuba.

I am, &c.  
(Signed) T. V. LISTER.

No. 2.

*Acting Consul-General Carden to Earl Granville.—(Received August 26.)*

My Lord,

*Havana, August 5, 1882.*

IN endeavouring to comply as fully and as soon as possible with the instructions contained in Mr. Lister's despatch of the 24th February, I venture to hope your Lordship will make allowance for the great difficulties experienced in obtaining statistics of any kind in Cuba, and much more so on a subject of such burning interest as that of slavery, about the extent and details of which the planters, as a class, have always done their best to withhold information as much as possible. Having at first tried to obtain private and, if possible, impartial testimony as to the present condition of the "patrocinados," I found that the data I could hope to procure in this way would be of so very fragmentary and local a nature that they would not be sufficient to base any general ideas upon; and I have therefore been forced to rely almost entirely on the figures supplied by the kindness of the Captain-General, supplementing them, where possible, by other information that has come to my knowledge.

The actual number of slaves in Cuba has probably at no time been properly known. Whether with the object of concealing infractions of the Slave Trade Treaties on the part of the authorities, or to avoid payment of capitation taxes on the part of the planters, gross misstatements have been constantly made on the subject, and no census of the slave population, up to the present time, has ever been taken in such a way or with such results as to entitle it to any credit as regards accuracy. The Register of 1867, which was probably one of the first serious attempts on the part of the Government to ascertain the number of the slaves, showed a total of 402,167. That of 1871, drawn up at a period of great excitement and confusion, showed 231,699. The census of 1877 gave 199,094, but it was generally admitted that many whose names did not appear in either of the Registers of 1867 or 1871, and who were therefore entitled

to their freedom, were still retained illegally in slavery, and that if they were included the total would be very largely increased. Indeed, it was confidently stated in the Cortes on several occasions that the unregistered slaves numbered over 70,000. It may therefore be said that all statements hitherto as to the number of slaves in Cuba have been in the main conjecture, based on Returns universally admitted to be incorrect.

The Law of Emancipation of 1880 can, I think, claim the merit of having supplied the first accurate Return. One of its Articles required every "patrocinado" to be provided with a "cedula," granted by the Central Committee in Havana on the application of his master, with the alternative that if he neglected to apply for it before a certain time (already expired on the 31st October, 1881) his right to the man's services would *de ipso facto* cease, and the man be given a paper as free. This has necessitated the formation of a Register which, in the interests of the masters themselves, must be a correct one, as the slaves are too well aware of the stipulations of the Act to submit to be retained in servitude unless their master had established his legal right to them; and, moreover, Inspectors are now being appointed to visit the estates and furnish with free papers those who are not otherwise provided for. Up to the present time, 135,415 "cedulas" of "patrocinados" have been issued, and there remain to be made out a further number, which I am assured will not exceed 2,000, for which the applications were duly presented in proper time. The total number of "patrocinados," therefore, in Cuba does not exceed 137,500, and is now probably somewhat less, owing to the emancipation which, as I shall explain later, is constantly going on.

Although these figures are greatly at variance with the estimates already mentioned, and with others that are still propounded and meet with credit among some classes, I see no reason to suppose that they are on that account the less correct.

As regards the actual working of the Law, from all I can learn it appears to be as satisfactory as could be expected considering the great difficulties to be encountered from bad administration, apathy, ignorance, and self-interest. The Returns I have the honour to inclose show that since the Law came into force 16,615 individuals have been granted their liberty through the different Committees, though it is not known as yet how many of them had already obtained their papers as "patrocinados," and should therefore be considered as included in the 135,415 before mentioned. These results have been, however, produced not so much directly by the special provisions of the Law as indirectly by its general tendency.

Unfortunately, the Returns of the emancipations effected during the first year of the working of the Act only give the numbers without any detail; but if we assume the causes to be in the same proportion as in the second year, we shall find that 66 per cent. were freed by the voluntary act of the masters; 11 per cent. under the provisions of the civil and penal laws in force before 1880; while only 23 per cent. directly resulted from the Law of Abolition. Of these 23 per cent., four-fifths obtained their freedom by purchase, and only one-fifth (about 775), owing to the non-fulfilment of the obligations imposed upon their masters by the new Law.

Although the information I have been able as yet to acquire is not sufficiently detailed to enable me to speak with absolute certainty, I think it will prove that a large proportion of these emancipations have been of slaves residing in or near large towns, and belonging to the class of domestic servants and artizans rather than to that of field hands. There are many reasons why it should be so. In the first place, the permanent official classes from which the Committees in the more important places are principally officered are, like the General Government, decidedly in favour of speedy emancipation, and the "patrocinados" therefore have a much better chance of a favourable hearing before them than in the minor local Courts, where the planter element predominates. Moreover, the Act has had the effect of creating a class of agents, necessarily more numerous in the towns than in the country districts, who make it their business to rake up and even promote disagreements between master and slave, and support the cases of the latter before the Courts; so that in many instances masters, even where in the right, have been glad to avoid trouble by giving their slaves their freedom. Add to this that the town blacks are lazier, do less work, and are less amenable to control, and it will be seen

that their masters have much less object in keeping them in servitude than the others.

But besides these there is another and perhaps a somewhat unexpected reason why there should be fewer emancipations in the country districts. I allude to the disinclination of many slaves to leave the place where they have been born and brought up and have their families, unless driven to it by very harsh treatment. It should be borne in mind that on almost all sugar estates the negroes have their little plots of land, on which they grow vegetables and raise fowls and pigs, often selling them to their master himself; indeed, it is rare to find an estate where the industrious ones have not at least 50 or 100 dollars laid by. Now that, besides these little earnings, they are receiving wages as well, I am convinced that, were it not for the restraining influences of locality and custom, many more would avail themselves of the power they unquestionably have to purchase their freedom, which year by year it is becoming easier for them to do, and I am inclined, therefore, to think that the fact of their not doing so more proves they are, on the whole, fairly treated.

As was only to have been expected, little or no improvement on the old system is observable in the dieting, clothing, instruction, &c., afforded to the slaves, and which were provided for in Article 4 of the Law; and it is probable that no complaint, based only on a breach of the provisions of that Article, would receive serious attention, at any rate in the local Courts, unless it was a very aggravated case, or involved the non-payment of wages.

In conclusion, I may say that although in remote districts the laxity of administration may admit of injustice or bad treatment of slaves escaping punishment, I consider the general effect of the Law to have been very salutary in forcing the masters to recognize the fact that the institution is inevitably doomed to come to an end within a fixed and very limited period, and that if they do not treat their people well now they may find a difficulty in retaining their services when free.

On the whole, the Spanish Government has reason to congratulate itself on the working up to the present of a Law which, while it seems to satisfy the negroes, or at any rate the industrious and reasonable ones, has yet given time to the planters, if only they will avail themselves of it, to accommodate themselves to their altered fortunes, and thus escape absolute ruin.

As regards the Chinese, I have much pleasure in informing your Lordship that, thanks to the tact and untiring energy of their Consul-General and his Staff, their condition has been improved to such an extent that they now practically enjoy the same immunities as other foreigners. Cases of their being robbed or imposed upon are now as rare as they were formerly numerous, and it is astonishing, when one does occur, how the news will be passed along from the most distant parts of the island until it reaches their Consulate, where it is sure of receiving attention, followed in most cases by redress.

Great difficulty is experienced in getting an accurate idea of their numbers owing to their roving habits, but it is estimated that there are in the whole island about 60,000. The poorest class are almost always labourers. As soon as they save a little money they start as pedlars or open a shop or stall, and occasionally from these small beginnings they realize quite a fortune; but as a general rule, when they reach a certain stage they lose all they have gained gambling, and fall back again to the condition of labourers.

I have, &c.

(Signed) LIONEL CARDEN.

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## Inclosure 1 in No. 2.

RETURN of the Number of "Patrocinados" emancipated between the 8th May, 1880, and the 8th of the same month, 1881.

Provinces.					Number of Emancipated.
Pinar del Rio	..	..	..	..	718
Habana	..	..	..	..	1,813
Matanzas	..	..	..	..	1,408
Santa Clara	..	..	..	..	1,359
Puerto Principe	..	..	..	..	353
Santiago de Cuba	..	..	..	..	715
Total	..	..	..	..	6,866

## Inclosure 2 in No. 2.

RETURN of the Number of "Patrocinados" emancipated between the 8th May, 1881, and the 8th of the same month, 1882.

Provinces.	Mutual Consent.	Renunciation of Rights of Patron.	Indemnization of Services.	Non-compliance with Stipulations of Article 4.	Other Infractions of Civil or Penal Laws.	Total
Pinar del Rio ..	407	434	281	17	80	1,219
Habana ..	550	1,138	465	228	224	2,605
Matanzas ..	1,170	452	487	27	453	2,526
Santa Clara ..	740	857	483	71	220	2,371
Puerto Principe ..	32	47	4	45	24	152
Santiago de Cuba .	640	301	281	18	136	1,376
Total ..	3,476	3,229	2,001	406	1,137	10,249

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