

those who, enjoying great moral consideration among their countrymen, and acquainted with the localities, know how to vary the means of improvement conformably with the manners, habits, and the position of every island. In preparing the way for the accomplishment of this task, which ought to embrace a great part of the archipelago of the West Indies, it may be useful to cast a retrospective glance on the events by which the freedom of a considerable part of the human race was obtained in Europe in the middle ages. In order to ameliorate without commotion, new institutions must be made, as it were, to rise out of those which the barbarism of centuries has consecrated. It will one day seem incredible, that until the year 1826, there existed no law in the Great Antilles to prevent the sale of young infants, and their separation from their parents, or to prohibit the degrading custom of marking the negroes with a hot iron, merely to enable these human cattle to be more easily recognized. Enact laws to obviate the possibility of a barbarous outrage; fix, in every sugar estate, the proportion between the least number of negresses and that of the labouring negroes; grant liberty to every slave who has served fifteen years, to every negress who has reared four or five children; set them free on the condition of working a certain number of days for the profit of the plantation; give the slaves a part of the net produce, to interest them in the increase of agricultural riches;\* fix a sum on the budget of the public funds, destined for the ransom of slaves, and the amelioration of their condition,—such are the most urgent objects for colonial legislation.

\* General Lafayette, whose name is linked with all that promises to contribute to the liberty of man and the happiness of mankind, conceived, in the year 1785, the project of purchasing a settlement at Cayenne, and to divide it among the blacks by whom it was cultivated, and in whose favour the proprietor renounced for himself and his descendants, all benefit whatever. He had interested in this noble enterprise the priests of the Mission of the Holy Ghost, who themselves possessed lands in French Guiana. A letter from Marshal de Castries, dated 6th June, 1785, proves that the unfortunate Louis XVI., extending his beneficent intentions to the blacks and free men of colour, had ordered similar experiments to be made at the expense of Government. M. de Richeprey, who was appointed by M. de Lafayette to superintend the partition of the lands among the blacks, died from the effects of the climate at Cayenne.