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JAMAICA.

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No. 1.

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Governor
Sir C. E. Grey
to
Earl Grey,
6th April 1847.

(No. 29.)

EXTRACT of a DESPATCH from Governor the Right Honourable Sir CHARLES EDWARD GREY to Earl GREY; dated King's House, Jamaica, 6th April 1847.

I HAVE the honour to lay before your Lordship a copy of a Message and a Memorial to Her Majesty from the House of Assembly, praying for an alteration in the Navigation Laws.

Enclosure in No. 1.

Encl. in No. 1.

MESSAGE of 1st April 1847.

May it please your Excellency,

We are ordered by the House to wait on your Excellency, and to request that you will be pleased to forward to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the accompanying Memorial to the Queen, with a request that his Lordship will present the same, in the most acceptable manner to Her Majesty.

Jamaica, ss.

TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

The humble Memorial of your Majesty's loyal and devoted subjects, the Assembly of Jamaica.

Most Gracious Sovereign,

Your Memorialists are representatives of the people of Jamaica, who were once wealthy and prosperous, and are now fallen in fortune, after struggling through a series of difficulties, which have been brought on them by the moral and political government of their mother country, Great Britain.

Without raising any question on this subject, or urging any further complaints as to the measures forced on them by the Government of Great Britain, they feel it imperative on them nevertheless to state, that circumstances over which they have had no control, have deprived very many of the ancient proprietors of their possessions, which have passed from them to mortgagees, and have been sold at prices in many cases less than the amount of one year's annual income, such as it was in past days; and that in many other cases estates have been sold, and are now for sale at a little more, and often less, than two years' purchase of their present returns, so totally have all the confidence of capitalists, and all hope of profitable cultivation in these cases passed away, as to this island.

Your memorialists have also respectfully to observe, that the commercial interests have participated in the decline and fall of those of the agriculturists, an effect always unavoidable; and that the trade of the island now gives so little remuneration, that many of the first mercantile houses in the city of Kingston are closing their establishments, in despair of better times; and that no new adventurers are likely to come forward to support, by their energies and enterprize, the languishing and decaying commerce of the country.

Your memorialists next submit most respectfully to Your Majesty, that the last legislative enactment of the British Parliament; viz. that of equalizing the duties in the markets of Great Britain on the production of your Majesty's free colonies, with those raised by slaves in other colonies, has fixed, if they may so say, the seal upon the adversities of Jamaica, paralysed every disposition to further exertion, and left a great proportion of their constituents in a state almost bordering on despair.

Your Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, in a despatch to his Excellency the Governor of Jamaica, dated 12 February 1847, makes the following observation, after stating, "that it is the duty of the Government to remove all unnecessary restrictions, and to afford all possible facilities to the colonial producer; you will impress upon the memorialists (the House of Assembly of Jamaica), that it is to their own exertions, rather than to legislative measures, that they should look for aid." Your memorialists have already shown their present incapacity for any very effectual exertion, pressed down as they are by all the accumulated difficulties, arising from a defective agricultural population, and the annihilation of every sort of protection in the British market, a protection which the island has enjoyed from the time it first became a British colony.

Under these circumstances, your memorialists beg permission to submit to Your Majesty, as their constituents are shortly to be bereft of all protection, and enjoined to depend on

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For Earl Grey's Despatch to the Governor of Jamaica; dated 12th February 1847. Vide Papers ordered by H. C. to be printed, 9th March 1847, No. 160, page 12.