If we do not take care, at the outset, to render the holding of slaves by British subjects in Africa highly penal, and perilous in the last degree, we shall see British capital again embarked, and vested interest acquired in human flesh. We shall, in spite of the warning we have had, commit a second time the monstrous error, to say nothing of the crime, of tolerating slavery. A second time the slave master will accuse us of being at least accomplices in his guilt; and once more we shall have to buy off opposition by an extravagant grant of money.

The suggestion, then, that I make is, that we shall lay it down as a primary and sacred principle, that any man who enters any territory that we may acquire in Africa is from that moment "free and discharged of all manner of slavery," and that Great Britain pledges herself to defend him from all, civilized or savage, who may attempt to recapture him. That one resolution will do much to give us laborers, to obtain for us the affections of the population, to induce them to imitate and adopt our customs, and to settle down to the pursuits of peaceful industry and productive agriculture.

No more daring attempt was ever made to form a settlement in Africa than that undertaken by Captain Beaver, near the close of the last century. His object was to establish a colony on the island of Bulama. Notwithstanding the errors into which he fell, and which proved fatal to his expedition, yet was it highly creditable to him, that at a time when the abolition of the slave trade had made but little way in the public mind, and when the extinction of slavery was not thought of, he should have perceived and applied principles so wise and so humane as those we find scattered in his interesting volume. His narrative proves two points; first, that the natives of Africa may be led to prefer legitimate commerce to slave dealing; secondly, that they were very willing to labor for wages.

The chief dissimilarity which first struck the Africans, in the conduct of this and that of other European settlements, was their refusal to purchase slaves.

"This they could not account for; neither were they altogether pleased with it at first; for, when negotiating with Niobana for the purchase of the Biafra territory, he said that 'it was very hard that we would not buy his slaves!' Having made him comprehend that our intention was rather to cultivate the earth than to trade, but that we should, notwithstanding, at all times trade with him for wax, ivory, clothes, &c.; in short, that we would buy every thing which he had to sell, except only slaves, whom he could always dispose of as he had been accustomed to do heretofore, he appeared satisfied; although he could not comprehend why we would not purchase the one, nor why we cultivated the other."

By their steadiness in this point, they got the character of being the first white men the natives had ever heard of "who could not do bad." And "from no circumstance," says Captain Beaver, "did we derive so much benefit as from our not dealing in slaves."

The natives not long after found out that these new colonists not only refused to purchase slaves, but that no man in their settlement was permitted to be considered in the light of a slave. The two first who came to Captain Beaver were full of suspicion; they remained with him a little more than three weeks, and then signified their desire to depart at the time when their help was most needed. Captain Beaver wisely did not even ask them to remain, but paid them their wages, and dismissed them with

presents. Their report induced others to take service, and he never after wanted grumetas; in one year he employed nearly two hundred of them. The Africans of these parts always, he says, go armed, and never voluntarily place themselves in the power of even a friendly tribe; but when they had once ascertained that these English colonists neither bought nor sold slaves, that every man was paid for the full value of his labor, and suffered to depart whenever he chose, "they came to me unarmed," says Captain Beaver, "and remained for weeks and months at a time on the island, without the least suspicion of my ever intending them evil." And this, though he was occasionally obliged to inflict punishment on individuals of their number for disorderly conduct. "Thus," he says, "by the negative merit of treating these people with common integrity, was I not only able to acquire their confidence, and, by their labor, to do almost all that was done upon the island, but also to overturn one of their strongest prejudices against us, and to convert their well-grounded suspicion of fraud and deceit in all Europeans into esteem and respect for the character of a white man."

I cannot dismiss the work of Captain Beaver without expressing my satisfaction in finding, that he, like others whom I have named, gathers from his experience on the coast of Africa that the slave trade is to be overthrown by fair dealing, and by the wealth which is to be raised from the soil. "One great motive of the Africans in making slaves, indeed, I may say the only one, is to procure European goods; slaves are the money, the circulating medium, with which African commerce is carried on; they have no other. If, therefore, we could substitute another, and at the same time that other be more certain and more abundant, the great object in trading in slaves will be done away. *This may be done by the produce of the earth.* "Let the native chiefs be once convinced that the labor of a free native in cultivating the earth may produce him more European goods in one year than he could have purchased if he had sold him for a slave, and he will no longer seek to make slaves to procure European commodities, but will cultivate the earth for that purpose." And this is the testimony which he bears to African industry, and to the facility of procuring labor:

"I know that those who choose always to see the African character in its worst light will probably say that they never will be induced voluntarily to labor; and that I betray a total ignorance of it, in supposing that they can ever be brought to cultivate the earth for wages. That assertion may be made; but my answer is, 'Put it to the test.' And I moreover say that, as far as my little knowledge of the Africans will enable me to judge, I have no doubt of their readily cultivating the earth for hire, whenever Europeans will take the trouble so to employ them. I never saw men work harder, more willingly or regularly, generally speaking, than those free natives whom I employed upon the island of Bulama. What induced them to do so? Their desire of European commodities in my possession, of which they knew that they would have the value of one bar at the end of the week, or four at the end of a month. Some of them remained at labor for months, ere they left me; others, after having left me, returned; they knew that the labor was constant, but they also knew that their reward was certain. I think, therefore, that, as far as my experience goes, I am warranted in saying that the Africans are not averse

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XIV. Books

2. Report of Mr. Kennedy, of Maryland
H.R. report no.283, 27th Congress
3rd session, Washington, D.C. 1843