

Letter from Richard D. Bayly concerning aid for his emancipated slaves.

From the PAS Collection's Incoming Correspondence 1820-1849.

Drummond Town May the 6th 1821

Dear Sir, Your letter having reached me only two days previous to the meeting of the Abolition Society (which as I was informed by a letter from Phil^a was to have taken place on the 30th ?) to my regret I had not sufficient time to return an answer before the meeting Day appointed for the meeting.

You know that generally there is no Register kept of the ages of our slaves, and having none myself I cannot pretend to be accurate as to the ages of my slaves but will endeavor to come near it.

The Eldest female is about 40 years of age & has 7 children

The Eldest Child is a female about 16 or 17 years of age

The Second - a female about 13 years of age

The Third - a male about 10 years of age

The fourth - a female about 8 years of age

The fifth - a male about 4 or 5 years of age

The sixth - a female about 3

The seventh - a female about 4 weeks old

The next Eldest Woman is about 35 years of age & has two children. A male about 14 or 15 years of age & a female about 12 years of age. Another woman is about 21 or 22 years of age & has 3 children. A male about 7 years of age. A female about 3 years of age & a female nearly 2 years of age.

One other woman between 20 & 30 years of age & having two children. A male about 4 years of age & a male about 2 years of age. A negro woman about 25 years of age with one child about one year of age.

The ages of the men are as nearly as I can judge as follows One about 45 years of age. Two forty years of age. One about 30 years of age Two about 25 years of age & one about 21 years of age. The negroes are in general healthy and I have thought that perhaps the time of some of those children might be sold to good masters till 21 years of age for something to aid in supporting the rest, but this I leave to the judgment of those better qualified to Judge than I am. Some of them I understand have expressed a wish not to leave me, if so I shall probably indulge them, but for the greater part are desirous to go and indeed it is my wish that they all should go as I cannot feel easy in mind to hold a slave.

I will deliver all the slaves that choose to accept of their freedom in the city of Philadelphia free from any charge to the Society & intend moreover when they leave me to supply them with provisions sufficient for them to subsist on for one month But I will not afterwards be at any further expense about them. Perhaps these slaves would here be estimated to at least one third (if no more) of my Estate, yet in a discharge of duty I do not consider the setting them free as any sacrifice. I mention it only to show that as my estate is not more than a comfortable maintenance for my whole family if Providence should deprive me of my personal exertions, that it ought not to be expected that I should incur any further expense about those emancipated negroes after their delivery in Phil^a more especially as I have 6 children 5 of whom are with me & may perhaps have a very large family to support.

I am very anxious to emancipate my slaves but to cast a parcel of helpless women & Children, beyond my protection as in this case they must necessarily be, with no person to

aid them, with no friend to relieve them in sickness or distress, with no person to counsel, guide & direct them is so abhorrent to the principles of humanity and every benevolent feeling of the heart that however desirous I am to restore them to their natural rights, yet I am constrained to pause, and first seek & endeavor to find them that aid that they must necessarily need. The Abolition Society has presented itself to my mind as an institution best calculated for this purpose. I have always understood that this society was formed upon the principles of justice & humanity- that their professed object has been to aid the present unfortunate race of Africans the descendants of ancestors, once free but who were by cupidity and avarice torn from their native soil and all the endearments of Society and deprived of the unalienable rights of man to toil the slaves of inhuman masters in a foreign land. Shall a man who is desirous of liberating his African slaves appeal in vain to such a society for their aid in the cause of humanity? Shall I be told (as has been suggested) that my negroes shall receive no friendly aid because it will be supposed that I am a humane master, and that therefore they had better remain in a state of bondage! Let them who make such arguments reflect that life is uncertain & although I may treat them with tenderness, yet as soon as death may take me from this world these slaves & their descendents for ages to come may be cruelly oppressed by the strong arm of an unrelenting tyranny.

The Accountability (in a Religious view) that would rest upon the members of the Abolition Society for not acceding¹ to the proposals I have made is not for me to determine.

Be pleased to communicate the foregoing to the Abolition Society & accept Sir my sincere thanks for your attention in this business & believe me to be

Your Sincere Friend

Richard D. Bayly

¹ Agreeing to

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