

THE "BLACK-VOTE" IN SENEGAL

BY PIERRE MILLE

(Translated by E. D. M.)

By a law passed on April 24 1834 in the reign of Louis Philippe the French Houses of Parliament decided that the Colonies which the Treaties of Vienna had left to France, and more particularly the Colony of Senegal, should be entitled to a Parliamentary representation precisely similar to that of a French Department. And at first sight nothing could appear more just. Why should a Frenchman who jeopardises his health and even his life in a deadly climate:—who runs the risk of incurring fever and dysentery, or of falling beneath the bullets or spears of Berber and Negro Mohammedans, be unworthy of the privilege of voting possessed by a land-owner of the environs of Paris who has never been called upon to defend himself, even against mosquitoes? and yet this generous decision was an error.

It was an error in 1834 when universal suffrage—one man, one vote—did not exist, and one was obliged to disburse a pretty considerable sum in order to become an elector. It was an error because those responsible for the passing of the law had not realized that its results would be immoral inasmuch as the Senegalese electors would, in reality, consist of a handful of whites, some of whom were slave-owners and alone, or practically so, able to pay the necessary election fee; and further, that these slave-owners would be considered as representing the free Negroes of Senegal whose interests were, in many cases, diametrically opposed to theirs. Another absurdity also became apparent viz. that this handful of colonial voters would appoint *one* representative, while a French constituency containing several thousand voters was similarly situated in respect to

its electoral representation. Under such circumstances, the Colony of Senegal was simply a rotten-borough.

Senegal being thus assimilated to France, that Colony, thanks to the same erroneously generous ideas, was given Municipal Councils and before long the Colonial Council which assisted the Governor was transformed into a General Council, in imitation of the General Councils of the French Departments. These innovations were not followed by immediate after-effects, as at that time, neither the General Councils, nor the Municipal Councils were elected bodies, their members being appointed by the Government.

But in 1848 it was decided under M. Schoelcher's inspiration, to abolish slavery. The preliminaries to this humanitarian step had not been sufficiently thought out and, in the Islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe, the inauguration was followed by a rebellion. But although no such event took place in Senegal—where the number of slaves was restricted and where the slaves were very well treated—the reform had, indirectly, an important result. Universal Suffrage, so far as the election of members of Parliament was concerned, had been instituted in France. At the same time—as we have seen—it was instituted in Senegal, as in every existing French Colony. The coloured inhabitants of Saint Louis, Rufisque, Goree and Dakar, the overwhelming majority of whom were then unacquainted with the French language, suddenly blossomed into voters and the democratic movement in France (which was in rapid process of development) taking place, according to the law, contemporaneously in Senegal, it followed that the members of the Municipal Councils and General Councils ceased very shortly to be selected by Government and became appointed by vote—that is to say by universal suffrage. We shall see later on that, as regards the General Councils of the Colonies, the effects of this change were unforeseen and mischievous.

I may perhaps be allowed at this stage to speak of the experiences of which I myself was a witness in the course of a visit some few years ago to St. Louis, capital of the Colony of Senegal, at a time when an election was in full swing there. In those days, six months residence was held to qualify a native to vote at the polls. A fairly large proportion of voters only knew

two words of French. Those two words were "moi électeur!" ("I, voter!"). Natives from the surrounding neighbourhood generally came to the polls under the guidance of their Chiefs. The polling took place in the town-hall of St. Louis.

This was what I observed. At the door of the municipal building, a noisy black crowd was pressing. A Marabout (Mohammedan preacher) squatting on the pavement, read the Koran in a loud and sonorous voice. Every now and then, some sable citizen broke in upon his eloquence to buy a *gris-gris*, a charm calculated to insure him immunity from bullets or from disease; or again to make him an object of attraction to the fair sex. The Marabout would sell him the desired *gris-gris*—consisting of a slip of paper upon which was written a verse from the Koran, or a magical formula familiar to the magician's stock-in-trade—for a sum varying from five to twenty francs according to the purchaser's means.

In the large hall of the *mairie* (town-hall) surged a great crowd. A hurricane of shouts, cries, supplications and complaints deafened the presiding officials. The duty of the latter was to confirm the identity of the voters. But the task, as we shall see, was beyond human achievement.

A tall Negro presents himself.

"What is your name?" enquire the officials.

"Samba Dhiop of N'Dolé."

"But"—exclaims in the Joloff tongue one of the members of the Department—"you have already voted. We have already given Samba Dhiop of N'Dolé a voting card. He claimed it some time ago, and you are not the same man."

"O! incomparable one"—replies the Negro—"I am in very deed Samba Dhiop of N'Dolé: surely an enemy has stolen my card in order to vote twice over for the bad candidate!"

"But there is another Samba Dhiop of N'Dolé, and you may, on the contrary, have stolen *his* card."

To clear up the situation and to find out what Samba Dhiop it is who is claiming (in the Joloff Country there are only about twenty native names in existence, hence hundreds of natives go by the same name) the officials next enquire his age.

"How old are you?"

After a moment's pause.

"At least five years old!"

Being over six feet in height and weaned for at least twenty-five good years, the officials of the Department dissolve in laughter. Thereupon the Negro indignantly protests:

"It is perfectly true, white men. At least five years old. I swear it. I am not lying!"

No more absurd *régime* could be imagined. Logically we might expect to find that a Colony saddled with such political impedimenta would be in a most deplorable financial and commercial condition. And yet, extraordinary as it may appear, the expected has not happened. Several large Bordeaux firms have been making considerable profits out of the Colony from the beginning of the Century. Every year these firms realize profits amounting to millions of francs. If we exclude the old military territories of the Western Sudan and the Colony of Guinea which are now autonomous, the trade of Senegal amounts to 73 million francs per annum, the imports figuring at 50 millions and the exports at 23 millions. Unlike the Ivory Coast, Congo, Dahomey, and French Guinea, Senegal is a poor country, a country for which nature has done hardly anything. The few gold mines it possesses are only worked by the Natives. There is very little rubber, no ivory, no coffee and no palm-oil. Senegal lives by her agriculture alone, and even her agriculture—a characteristic feature—is a *commercial* agriculture. By that, I mean that in Senegal, the white man, with very few exceptions, is neither a landed proprietor nor a planter. He is content to purchase gums and ground-nuts from the native. He is merely a merchant. It is important that this state of things should be thoroughly grasped. Here we have a Colony where the Native is the sole producer and a producer to the tune of very large sums. Moreover the Native works spontaneously, for he is not a slave, and forced labour does not exist in Senegal. Contrarily therefore to what occurs in Guadeloupe, Martinique, Reunion, and also in the British Colony of Mauritius, in all of which places the freed slaves have not supplied a sufficiency of labour and where a political *régime* identical with that of Senegal has produced wholly pernicious results, the black vote in Senegal has not reacted adversely upon the commercial development of the Colony. How can the phenomenon be explained?

The paramount reason is that Senegal has from the beginning been an aristocratic Colony, and that the aristocracy which formed itself there has been powerful enough to maintain up to the present its dominating position. Although founded by an association of merchants, ship-owners, and slave-dealers of Dieppe and Rouen in 1626, it really dates back to 1816, after the Treaties of Vienna which resulted in the loss of the fragments of a Colonial Empire, which the Bourbon Monarchy had preserved so to speak despite itself, and despite the most egregious blunders. Moreover if England did not claim at the period of the great liquidation of 1815 the Colony of Senegal, it was no doubt because England did not think Senegal worth having. At that time navigation was still confined to sailing ships. To-day Dakar as a coaling depot is of the greatest utility; but then St. Helena and the Cape appeared sufficient as ports of refuge and replenishment on the road to India. As for trade it was practically nil—that is trade consisting in *honest* merchandize. The whole of the Colony of Senegal was reduced to the Island of Goree, which was little else than a centre for the Slave Trade. But as the abolition of the slave-trade had been decreed by the Treaties of 1815 Senegal was useless to England, all the more so as English public opinion was strongly opposed to the slave-trade.

The Bordeaux ship-owners however held very different views. They took over the spots abandoned by their Normandy rivals, and their continuity of purpose, their energy and commercial instincts, were worthy of all praise. Seeing that France had to all intents and purposes lost everything in Africa with the exception of Senegal, the Bordeaux merchants determined to work that Colony. The system known as the Colonial Compact (*Pacte Colonial*) gave them the means of doing so. That system we know was as follows. All articles for barter-trade were to be bought in France: similarly all substances produced from sale, barter, or purchase were to be imported into France, and French vessels were alone permitted to be the conveyers of such trade. Finally although a decree promulgated in 1791 had declared that the trade of Senegal was free to all Frenchmen, the large Bordeaux firms established before the Revolution of 1789 continued to enjoy a practical monopoly because they were

better equipped.¹ These firms possessed the best type of white *employés*, at once the smartest and the most honest, and the Negro interpreters, called "instructors of languages," were the best fitted in every way to attract caravans from the interior.

The chief product of the Senegambian region was gum. The Bordeaux firms formed a Syndicate for the purchase of this product and got the administration to recognise it. Every year a list of Gum traders (called "Great traders") was drawn up by the Association which was composed of scrupulously honest individuals. To be included on that list was a difficult matter: to be excluded therefrom was easy. The least peccadillo was sufficient to entail expulsion. Trade was pronounced opened on a certified date, and was closed also on a fixed date. It somewhat resembled a race between gentlemen-riders, who undertook only to employ horses of the same age, and of equal average weight: who consider themselves equals and decline to admit on the turf a man not of this class or a horse without his pedigree.

All this appears monstrous to us. As a matter of practical fact, no white man could go to Senegal—that is to say to Goree and St. Louis, for the only factories on the mainland were managed by Negro sub-agents—unless he were attached to what was called a *large firm*. The agricultural evolution which made the Colony's prosperity was certainly delayed thereby, because these great firms had their own conservative way of transacting business and were slow to adopt any innovation in their methods. But, on the other hand, these commercial institutions offered many advantages. Three at least are worthy of mention.

The first was that the black sub-agent became linked to the great white merchant on semi-feudal lines. He learned to feel confidence in the white man and in his word, and as competition existed between the "Great" firms, and as France only had a handful of soldiers at St. Louis, the native was not molested, and bartered his goods on a basis of commercial equality. The whites lived in the Islands or on the Coast. The Joloffs remained owners of the inland country where the

¹ It may be remarked that in all initiatory colonial effort "equipment" means men.

population became rapidly denser because it benefited by this trade. Thus whites and blacks became acquainted with one another through the best elements in both.

The second advantage was that the white agents themselves were selected with the greatest care. A voyage between Bordeaux and Senegal by sailing vessel was a very long affair. It was essential therefore that no mistake should be made concerning the uprightness and intelligence of the agents selected: to replace them meant a great loss of time, and before the substitute could reach his destination the mischief perpetrated by his predecessor might have occasioned the gravest injury to the firm.

The third advantage, outcome of the two others, was that a class of half-breeds grew up, small in point of numbers, but of a very high stamp, both morally and intellectually. The climate of Senegal did not allow the whites, as in the West Indies and Reunion, to bring European wives with them. They, therefore, took concubines from among the people of Senegal. Now the white man in Senegal, as I have already said, was a kind of aristocrat. He owed it to himself to select the daughters of natives distinguished by birth, daughters of Chiefs: his influence became necessarily greater by the union. Vanity played its part, and the comeliest, the best-dressed, the relatively most educated girls were chosen. Thus was created the curious and very interesting type of *Signare* (probably a corruption from the Spanish *Señora*). The Signare was proud of being united to a white man. When the latter left to spend a holiday in France—a very unusual occurrence—the Signare accompanied her companion to the sea-shore, kissing the sand on which for the last time his feet had pressed, taking some of it back to her nightly couch and sleeping upon it as a witness to her fidelity, until “the man of the Sea,” the white man to whom she had given herself, returned from his mysterious country. These unions were admitted by local law which recognized the father’s name and saw that a portion of the inheritance was set aside for the children. Even if the Catholic Priest did not consecrate these unions at the altar, he at least attended the wedding feast.

The offspring of these well-nigh legitimate marriages are still

living and to them have in turn been born children who occupy important positions, either in the commerce or the politics of the Colony. One of them became the friend of Faidherbe, and perchance inspired the policy of that military Governor. He died a few years ago in Bordeaux, partner in one of the largest trading firms in Senegal, loaded with well-deserved honours and owner of a magnificent income. His name has perpetuated itself, for he had descendants.

The high moral work of these Senegalese half-breeds intensified Faidherbe's convictions as to the mental and moral equality of the white and Negro races. He thought that the future belonged to the fruit of their unions. He was not altogether mistaken. This intermingling has practical advantages. General Dodds is a living proof, for he has black blood in his veins (there are others like himself in the French Army). General Dodds was thought worthy of high rank, and on the other hand he is impervious to yellow fever, which decimates pure whites on the west coast of Africa: his native blood inoculates him.

Faidherbe arrived in Senegal in 1855, and was therefore in complete sympathy with the legislators who without any preparatory steps, had just granted universal suffrage, to all the natives of the Colony which he governed. The intelligence and honesty of the men of mixed blood, sprung from the unions of the *Signares* with a few white men, were calculated to impress him. He himself, we know, became the most enthusiastic and influential apostle of race-union, and married a black woman of whom he was proud to possess children. Moreover being devoted to the principles of the French Revolution, he was a profound believer in the equality of all men. By a striking coincidence, no divergency of views has existed in this respect between Christians and disciples of 18th century philosophy. For the latter, intelligence being equally divided between all men, they only differ by their lights. They all have the same rights. In the eyes of Christians, all men possessing a soul are destined to meet one of two fates, Heaven or Hell. They must, therefore, be treated alike and submitted to the same discipline, the object of which is to secure their salvation. The doctrines of scientific positivism of the 19th

century have grafted upon these views a kind of retrogression to Old Testament principles. It is admitted—if not that certain races are impure and should be destroyed—at least, that there are certain inferior races which the white man regards with a somewhat scornful pride. In point of fact, the white man's burden which Kipling speaks of is an agreeably light one. It consists in his apostrophising his coloured brother thus, "You good nigger, black my boots and work my gold mines." I cannot blame Faïdherbe for having extended a more generous welcome to his black brother. It is advisable to add that he witnessed an encouraging sight, to wit the transformation of the Senegalese bush, from Saint Louis to Dakar, into an agricultural country, and the savage Joloff changed into a peasant and farmer of ground-nuts.

A whole history could be written about that transformation and it is no exaggeration to say that it would be an edifying and glorious history. In 1848 it was discovered that the ground-nut, which yields an excellent oil, flourished splendidly all along the Coast. In these days such a discovery would be considered as justifying the cession of that Coast to a certain number of Companies created in London, Paris, or Brussels, and the right to compel, by some means or other, the natives to work for those Companies. But towards the middle of last century, such a scheme would not have commended itself to the judgment of the Authorities. In the first place it would have been looked upon as a blow to humanity. In the second place fire-arms were not so perfected as they are at present, and general cupidity had not been so keenly excited by the present day habit of interesting a whole people of European shareholders in the enslaving and depossession of an African tribe.

The great Bordeaux firms were, therefore, led by force of circumstances to perform an admirable work. They taught the Joloffs *to work for themselves in fields of their own*. One of the agents of these firms, named Hilaire, invented a sort of tool to plough the earth which somewhat resembled the tool employed by the native for the same purpose, only that it was an improved edition of it. [This instrument still bears the name of its inventor. In Senegal, they say *une hilaire*; it is a kind

of hoe.] A half-breed called Chaumette used his influence to get this tool adopted. With many other initiators, whose names history unfortunately has not retained, he succeeded in convincing the Joloffs that it was their interest to labour, sow and reap, and that their crops could be purchased at a fixed rate. It was thus that Senegal became one of the greatest oil-nut producing countries in the world, and there, extraordinary as it may seem, the native has remained the owner of the soil he fertilises.

It cannot be a matter for astonishment that Faidherbe should have been optimistic under such conditions. Unfortunately, the discovery of steam, the mental status of the black and half-breed populations of the other French Colonies, and the too rapid bounds of democratic evolution in France, soon lowered the moral and political tone of the Senegalese population.

What, it may be queried, has steamship communication got to do with the matter? It works out like this. Steamship communication facilitates journeys between France and Senegal and *vice versa*. The unions between white men and Senegalese women became more fleeting in character. The men who contracted these unions were less scrupulous. Even the development of ground-nut cultivation, and its resulting effect—increase in trade—played their part in bringing about the moral retrogression of which I have spoken. Faidherbe convinced the French Government that to defend the fields of Joloff farmers and to protect the interests of gun and ground-nut merchants, it was essential to conquer the inland country and bring the roving bands of marauders in the interior to book. More soldiers were imported, and the soldier does not trouble himself much about the education of children whom he may have by native women. The intermingling of the races became much more frequent, but it was perpetuated by an inferior type.

I wish to make myself thoroughly understood. The accusations made against cross-races, *as such*, start from false premises. The moral worth of half-breeds depends upon their antecedents. The son of a French merchant established in London, and of a young English girl of good family, would stand a good chance of becoming an honest man. The son of a ruffian of the Parisian

exterior *boulevards*, and of an unfortunate of Soho, would have to struggle against hereditary tendencies and a deplorable upbringing. The same thing applies in the Colonies. In Senegal, mulattos born under the new conditions knew French fairly well, received instruction in the schools which steadily increased in number, and had constantly before them the example of the important position occupied by their elders. They were often inferior to the latter in all respects, and their parents had not left them an acquired heritage. Their ambitions grew with their jealousy. Thus the transformation by universal suffrage in 1866 of the General Councils into elected bodies, and the arrival of half-breed or black officials from the Colonies of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Reunion, affected them detrimentally by teaching them to what purposes they could turn their votes and the votes of the blacks, over whom they, naturally, wielded great influence.

The half-breed Senegalese could not unfrequently lay claim to freedom of origin. His forbears were not slaves. Indeed, his antecedents were often semi-noble. Even when of slave descent, the slave had been well treated. The native population of Senegal had endured neither cruelty nor humiliation at the hands of the whites. But in the West Indies and the Islands of the Indian Ocean a different state of affairs had prevailed. The freed slaves continued to carry the blot of slavery, to be looked upon and to look upon themselves as descendants of former slaves, of men who were wont to receive corporal punishment. And they had yet another bitter recollection in the thought of having sprung from concubines for whom their masters had neither respect nor affection.

This population of freed slaves includes exceedingly intelligent and even artistic elements—the half-breed is often gifted in literary, legal, medical, and musical attainments. He does not lightly put up with the slights visited upon him in the country where he lives by the white man. It was a great mistake on the part of the Government to send to Senegal official agents, administrators, or judges, belonging to this race in formation, a race which, like some children of mixed blood, is sensitive to the point of morbidity. The advent of the new-comers gave rise to a spirit of discontent and jealousy not previously existing,

and they invented a formula which made some headway, viz : "Senegal for the Senegalese."

What that formula meant was this : control of the finances of the Colony by the natives. The General Councils established throughout the Colonies had been given, as was their just due, a very much wider autonomy than was possessed by the General Councils in France as regards revenue and expenditure. It was supposed that the members of the Council, being on the spot, would be much more competent to judge of the real needs of the Colony and of the requisite expenditure involved than the central administration in Paris. But at that period the General Council was somewhat analogous to the Government Council in the English Colony of Mauritius. It was the Metropolis which in point of fact selected the members.

Universal Suffrage changed all that. The Great Bordeaux firms wanted to control the administrative and customs policy of the Colony from motives of self-interest which often led to mutual rivalry. Everyone tried, therefore, to catch the half-breed and black vote, and to gain the desired end, voters were promised participation in the revenue in the form of appointments, subventions, or even free-gifts. These expenses absorbed in the long run a large portion of the Colony's finances which had previously been in a flourishing condition : for instance, nearly half the funds credited to Education was swallowed up. The most flagrant abuses no longer astonished anybody. A younger brother was made to benefit by an official grant or educational fund to which an elder brother was entitled. Similarly a sister benefited by what a brother should have received. Any such grant came to be looked upon as an inheritance. I have letters before me sent to the General Council which are most significant. One man explains that he has failed in the examination for admittance to a large school. This might be expected to disqualify him from further benefiting by his *bourse d'éducation* (educational grant). That, however, is by no means his opinion.

"I have not," he says, "been admitted at St. Cyr. I shall be obliged, therefore, to take my degree. That will cost me much more. You used to give me 1,500 fcs.; now I want 2,400 fcs."

Another correspondent ingenuously explains the *right* which he deems himself to have over the Councils :—

"With no income," he writes, "formerly *demi boursier*¹ of your colony, I venture to rely not only on your goodwill, but upon your sense of justice, that you will see your way, etc."

Finally, a coloured lady writes :—

"I have the honour to inform you that I had a little daughter by Mr. X—, Custom House Clerk. *On that account* I beg to solicit a fund for the education of my poor child."

In a single sitting of the ordinary session of 1896, I counted 26 of these petitions. Worse was to follow. A loan of five millions of francs for Public Works was squandered in the same way: the Dakar jetty was so badly made that it had to be begun over again. From 1892 to 1896 the exports fell from 18½ million francs to 10 millions.

What is really marvellous is the way in which the Colony recovered herself. It was truly a *coup de théâtre*, and enables one to vividly realize the initiative which a French Government and French Colonists can very often show. Of this spirit of initiative and of its success nothing is ever known, even, and indeed especially, in France, because there the newspapers only speak of what is "going wrong"! I am not sure however that the characteristics of the Press of some other countries to always preach that everything is going well, has not disadvantages also.

When the great French commercial firms in Senegal realized that in five years the revenue from import duties had fallen from 3,317,000 fcs. to 2,000,000, they understood that in trying to capture the native vote, each for their own personal interest, they had miscalculated things. All they had succeeded in doing was to raise up a swarm of officials and financial parasites, most of whom belonged to the coloured element. And so, bearing in mind their previous cut-throat competition in the matter of the purchase of the ground-nut from the natives and how they had put an end to such competition by jointly agreeing upon an

¹ A *demi-boursier* is a pupil whose educational expenses are shared equally by his parents and by the political or charitable institution which has granted the *demi-bourse*, that is to say, agreed to go halves in paying the school fees. M. Pasteur, for instance, was a *demi-boursier* of the Jura Department. (Author's note.)

average purchase price, they resolved to combine together to "run the elections."

As soon as the majority of these firms had come to an understanding, the game was won. Together they influenced a large number of votes. Before the abolition of slavery, every white family possessed, as did the Native Chiefs of the neighbourhood, a number of domestic slaves. The treatment of these domestic slaves was very different to the treatment meted out to them in the West Indies. Living in the house, these captives were privileged. They looked upon themselves as part of the family. When their daughters married, the master of the house gave them jewellery. The head of the family always keeps a special fund for this purpose. It is called the "jewel fund" and is sacred. It is not touched even at a time of great misfortune. These freed slaves have become very similar to the freed slaves of the Roman world. They are the clients of the Patrician, and it is but natural that they should vote for him.

They were, therefore, called upon to vote, and a fact to be noted is that many of the half-breeds, off-shoots of an old and aristocratic connection, voted against their fellow-countrymen. The merchants won, not without difficulty it is true, because slight rioting took place in the streets of St. Louis. Nevertheless they did win. No sooner had the victory been secured than the newly elected members of the General Council wielded the scalpel with resolute hand. In 1896, the first year of their term of office, they cut down the financial disbursements by 500,000 fcs. On one head alone, viz. expenditure on the Public Works' staff, the total was reduced from 147,000 fcs. to 78,000 fcs. This did not prevent the continuation and completion of the work in hand which cost over 3,000,000 francs and was finished in two years. Trade went up by leaps and bounds. In 1899, it reached 73 millions, exports and imports included, an increase of 11 million francs on the preceding year. The genius of the white man had conquered. He had understood how to manipulate the black vote.

Such is the history of a somewhat lengthy political experience (the natives of Senegal have possessed the rights of French citizens for fifty-three years). Looking at the matter coldly and dispassionately, it does not seem as though this experiment has

been entirely successful from a political point of view because, if the Colony of Senegal has managed to put its house in order and finds itself to-day in a fairly flourishing condition financially, agriculturally and commercially, it is largely due to the circumstances that the native voters are "clients" of an influential white *gens*, and vote as they are told to vote. Again, the legislators of 1848 certainly intended that as the territorial area occupied by France extended, so the natives of that extended area would become French citizens. But nothing of the kind has taken place. There are only four "*communes de plein exercice*" in Senegal, only four districts, that is, where the electoral system fully prevails, viz., Saint Louis, Dakar, Goree, and Rufisque. The remainder—a huge Empire—is administered with an interesting suppleness under the most diverse conditions, according to the state of civilization or submission—or lack of submission—of the natives. Some territories are directly governed, others are protected and the native King has a Resident to help him. Elsewhere the King is simply an ally or vassal and pays tribute and is perhaps assisted by our troops. There have never been in the French Possessions of West Africa rebellions such as those which the collection of the Hut-Tax has brought about in British West Africa.

France had made a mistake in granting suffrage to the Natives. She did not withdraw her present, but took good care not to repeat it elsewhere.

There is a point, however, upon which it is most essential to insist. It is this. If, from the political point of view of the whites, the granting of the suffrage to the blacks was an evil, it was not an evil from the natives' standpoint, either morally or socially. Having become French citizens and notwithstanding that they were Moslems, they, with few exceptions, accepted monogamy. Moreover, they remained owners of their land, being confirmed in that ownership by French law, which protected them, and they have spread far and wide in Africa the renown and the justice of French Administration. At the same time they have learned to work themselves without being compelled to do so. The Joloffs had never made good slaves: slave-traders would have none of them. A Joloff was contemptuously refused in the slave-markets of the United States

and Brazil. And yet it is men of this race, previously declared worthless, who now labour voluntarily on all the railways in course of construction in West Africa! Colonel Thys has said that without them the Congo Railway would not be finished to-day.

There is a lesson to be drawn from this. The native is often discouraged from working by the fear of being ultimately deprived of the fruits of his labour. The Joloff is quite sure that he will not be so deprived, because he is a French citizen, and because he knows that he can find thereby judges and protectors.

He has told his neighbours that labour contracts signed with white men are respected by the latter. His neighbours have repeated it to their neighbours. Everything has not been pernicious therefore in the spontaneous effort of liberalism which made voters of the Joloffs. But the same results might, no doubt, have been attained by other means and without so many drawbacks.

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