

R E P O R T .

The Committee upon Labor and Immigration beg leave to submit the following Report:

The Committee have given to the subject the anxious and thoughtful consideration which its paramount importance demands.

Since the sudden abrogation of our hereditary and patriarchal system of involuntary servitude, greatly unsettling and demoralizing, as might have been expected, that hitherto useful and contented class of labor, no subject has arisen of more immediate and pressing importance to the agricultural and planting interest of the State.

The black man, naturally kind, amiable and submissive, is admirably fitted for the servile condition which for two centuries he has so advantageously occupied in this country, and under which he has been lifted from a state of barbarism and heathenism to one of civilization and Christianity. Whether in his new condition of freeman, he shall be able in the great race of life to cope successfully with the more active and enterprising white man, is a problem which time alone can solve. If we compare his condition in the free States, where for generations no impediment has existed to his moral and intellectual improvement, with rare exceptions, we must conclude that a retrograde, instead of an advanced condition, is his unhappy fate. Truthfully and graphically as he was described by his liberator, President Lincoln, "a houseless, homeless and landless race," instead of bewildering and intoxicating his mind with ideas of learning and literature, and social and political equality, he had been taught that *work*—honest, faithful work—was the first great lesson of life; and that by work, and work alone, could he gain an honest livelihood, and lift himself from want and degradation to independence and respectability. Our jails and penitentiary would not now be filled, as they are, to repletion with colored criminals, and this Legislature engaged in the difficult task of seeking foreign labor as a substitute to cultivate our neglected and unproductive fields, had he not been so suddenly snatched from those to whom he looked for counsel and protection, and thrown, all unprepared, upon his own unaided efforts.