

Private

Trinidad

Jan 9 1748.

My dear Sir,

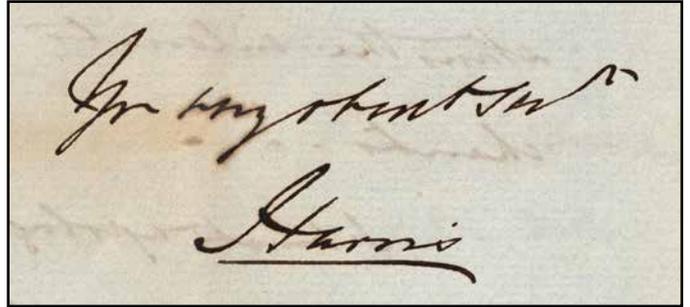
I have to acknowledge
the receipt of your letter
with the pamphlet enclosed
with a copy of your speech
in answer to Sir John
Molesworth.

With the latter I was
privately acquainted
and considered that you

George Francis Robert Harris, 3rd Baron (1810-1872)

An Important Letter from Trinidad by the Colonial Governor who established Public Education for Children of all Races on the Island \$2600

A 20-page Autograph Letter Signed by George Francis Robert Harris, 3rd Baron, a Liberal politician and colonial administrator, and Governor of Trinidad and Tobago from 1846 to 1853. A very long letter designated "Private", signed "Harris" as Colonial Governor, and addressed to "My dear Sir" [almost certainly to Sir Benjamin Hawes, M. P. for Kinsale], discussing affairs of the Colony and specific recent pamphlets on colonial affairs. Five Octavo bifolium gatherings, dated Trinidad, Jany. 5, 1848 [but misdated, intended to be 1849].



A lengthy letter to Hawes discussing the pamphlet *Observations in Answer to Sir William Molesworth's Speech [Tuesday, July 25, 1848] on Colonial Expenditure and Government* by J. T. Danson, Esq., Barrister-at-Law, examining the issues raised about Colonial Government, the prevailing bias for the colored and black races against the planters, the subject of racial differences, the provision of education for the Negroes, landlords, the expenditure of colonial government, the high cost of living in the colonies, English influence, and much else.

A wide-ranging letter, presumably written to Hawes who was made Under-Secretary of State for War and the Colonies in Lord John Russell's government. It was Harris who brought a system of local government to Trinidad, "which was indispensable to the efficient operation of an education system," but "Economic conditions precluded political and social reform, and such ambitious plans for education and local government had to be temporarily shelved. The closing months of 1847 saw Trinidad sinking into its worst economic depression of the century..." -Ameer H. Ali, *Development of Higher Education in Trinidad and Tobago 1498-1968*, pp. 30-40, doctoral dissertation, Ottawa, 1975.

It was during those exact conditions that Lord Harris penned this letter. "Lord Harris was appalled at the low educational standard in Trinidad... Harris also started the first public library in Port-of-Spain... a steamer that shuttled between south Trinidad and Port-of-Spain was named after him. Today, Lord Harris Square in Port-of-Spain is reminiscent of the man who brought mass education to Trinidad." -Gerard A. Beeson, *Lord Harris: Live and Learn!* in *The Caribbean History Archive* (2011).

Despite his many laudable accomplishments in Trinidad, Governor Harris, was, in the end, of course, still a 19th century British politician. He writes: "There has generally been too great a leaning towards the coloured & black race & against the planters manifested... I think the unwillingness of the white proprietors or planters to provide for the education of the negroes is a good deal overstated... The blacks show little disposition to acquire more than small properties. In a few years when they have got rid of the bothering of the white, for they look upon his ideas of industry in that light, they will be a happy contented indolent race... Not only did the white proprietors send their children to Europe for their education, but many of the coloured people did the same & any blacks getting into good circumstances have followed their example. By this they have acquired better habits, higher notions of

civilisation & more extended ideas-their poverty now prevents this-and they will consequently become more prejudiced-less easy to manage. In fact there can be no doubt that unintentionally we have been forming a number of embryo republics... but of this I am certain-that it is only by our own race & chiefly by Englishmen-that we keep up our influence & power, & thus the interests of our merchants,' and hope that "the ideas & opinions of a person on the spot however unworthy of much regard, may be of some little assistance to you with respect to the subjects referred to."

An important and substantive letter touching directly on black education in Trinidad and on the details of Colonial rule of black islanders. [BTC#429712]