

76

THE  
INTERFERENCE  
OF THE  
BRITISH LEGISLATURE,  
IN THE  
*Internal Concerns of the West India Islands,*  
RESPECTING THEIR SLAVES,  
*DEPRECATED.*

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BY  
A ZEALOUS ADVOCATE  
FOR THE  
ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE.

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of the age were engaged, and who both  
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**BRITISH LEGISLATURE,**  
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THE Abolition of the Slave Trade forms an important feature in the history of modern times, and must necessarily be attended with material changes in our colonies in the West Indies. For upwards of a century, our statute book had registered encouragements for the traffick in Slaves; and to get it as much as possible into our hands was the grand aim of former politicians. On a sudden, the advantages resulting from it were called into question; and it was opposed on the grounds of religion, morality, and humanity. A Society for its Abolition was formed, and after a very arduous struggle, in which the two greatest orators



of the age were engaged, and who both filled successively high offices in the administration, a final stop was put to the traffick in Slaves by British Subjects; and what was accomplished here produced so great an effect on the cabinets of other countries, that very probably an end will soon be put to the practice of transporting Slaves from Africa to the New World.

The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade derives its origin from the Society of Friends, who prepared the way for it by calling the attention of the public to the nature of the traffick in Africa, and the misery suffered by its inhabitants in the transportation from their own shores to our islands in the West Indies. A peculiar circumstance led to the diffusion of the views of the Friends, arising from its being made the subject of a prize essay in the university of Cambridge; for the student, who gained it, entered warmly into the question, and by unremitting exertions was instrumental in the formation of smaller societies, and the procuring of petitions from every part of the United Kingdom.



The university of Cambridge was also one of the first public bodies that gave its decided sanction to the measure of the Abolition, both by petitions to parliament and subscriptions for the expense with which it was attended. This circumstance cannot be passed over in silence, as it is a sufficient answer to those, who imagine the question of the Abolition to have arisen and to have been fostered by sectarian prejudices; for, though the suspicion may have gained ground from the character of the gentleman, who, with such credit to himself and advantage to the cause, managed the Bill in parliament, it may be safely averred, that, without doors, seldom has been seen such unanimity; and the members of the church of England were not less zealous in their efforts than those of the church of Scotland, and the various communions of Christians dissenting from the two churches established by law in this island.

Against the intended measure were naturally embodied the West India Merchants and Planters; and the repeated majorities in their favour in the House of Commons are



a sufficient proof, that the arguments of the Abolitionists were checked by the fears and apprehensions not only of those who were connected with the West Indies, but of many to whom we cannot deny that independence of principle and fairness of judgement, which were perhaps arrogated with too great confidence by those, who advocated what were deemed the rights of humanity. Indeed, it were not in the nature of man to surrender at once to a call, abruptly made, to set aside a trade authorised, encouraged, and sanctioned by repeated acts of parliament; nor can any blame attach to those, who, relying on the faith and encouragement of such high authority, had embarked their property to a very considerable amount in the traffick in Slaves and the cultivation of land by them, if feeling that property endangered by the proposed measure, and their characters wantonly attacked in its progress, they resisted it with more than ordinary pertinacity. In fact, the battle, with the usual exceptions, which might be expected from the passions engaged, was well fought on



both sides. The Abolitionists, by means of a great statesman, to whom very little credit has been given upon this occasion, were crowned with success. An act of parliament was passed, prohibiting all future traffick in Slaves, and very severe penalties were attached to those who should persist in it. With the passing of the act all opposition ceased on the part of the West India Merchants and Planters; they considered themselves bound equally with all other subjects by this law; and, notwithstanding insinuations to the contrary, there does not appear to be any ground to believe, that the great body of them have in any way whatsoever, either openly or covertly, encouraged or connived at any inroads upon the act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

With the passing also of the act the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, having obtained the end for which it was formed, was naturally dissolved. The communications, that had taken place on this subject between the metropolis and different parts of the kingdom, gradually ceased;



and most of the persons, that had been actively engaged out of the metropolis, conceived, that they could rely entirely upon what had passed in parliament, and that they should not be called upon in future to interfere on a similar occasion. But it is now necessary to consider more attentively the nature of this Society. Its object, as the name imports, was the Abolition of the Slave Trade; and to this object, and this object alone, was the great majority of the members devoted. In so numerous a body, it may naturally be expected, that some carried their views farther, and, in fact, in the course of the discussion, the term Emancipation of the Blacks escaped; and every one, who has heard of the scenes which have taken place in St. Domingo, may readily conceive with what horrors the apprehension of such a result from the Abolition of the Slave Trade must have been entertained by the West India Planters. Every assurance was however given, both in and out of parliament, that no such measure was in the contemplation of the great body of the petitioners for the Aboli-



tion. It cannot be denied, however, and their subsequent conduct renders it probable, that, from the first, certain individuals looked upon the Abolition of the trade as a preparatory step only to the speedy Emancipation of the Slaves ; yet, however bold their language may be in the present day, it is certain, that the great majority of petitioners had no other object in view than the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and that they had not the least idea of interfering with the internal government of the colonies.

In the measure, which it is the object of this pamphlet to discuss, this is a very important fact, requiring more consideration than has been bestowed upon it by the writers on the different sides of the question. An attempt is on foot to induce parliament to interfere in a peculiar manner in the regulation of the internal government of the colonies in the West Indies. It is natural to enquire, whence such an attempt originates, and the frequent use made of the Abolition of the Slave Trade soon leads us to some persons, who were concerned in



that measure. How they became enlisted in this new service will be seen in the sequel; but they are not to be confounded with the original movers and continued supporters of the plan of Abolition. This new society, for the regulation of the internal concerns of the West India Islands, is a self constituted society: it claims no small degree of merit from the connection of its members with those for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and no small degree of confidence from the success of that measure. But two things are to be considered; first, that whatever may have been the merit of the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, this does not entitle a few individuals to support in quite a different measure, and one which the society never permitted to enter into its discussions: and secondly, that, allowing the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade to have forgotten its first principles, and to enter into the new speculation of regulating the internal concerns of the West India Islands, the gentlemen, who have entered into it, would not be exactly the persons chosen to



bring such a measure into parliament, as they might, upon examination, appear, from manifest proofs of their conduct in a much easier concern, to be perfectly incompetent to the task of regulating the affairs of any colony.

This may seem to be a bold assertion, and it ought not to be adopted without decisive proof. To give this proof, it is requisite to revert again to the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade; which, in the course of its proceedings, was naturally led to an investigation of the internal state of Africa, and more particularly of that coast in which was the great traffick in Slaves for the West Indies. An idea was started, that a settlement might be established on this coast, from which the Slave Trade should be entirely excluded; and, by this mean, a nucleus might be formed, which would greatly promote the civilisation of that part of Africa. Scarcely was the hint thrown out when the plan was arranged and adopted: a considerable subscription was raised, and a Company was instituted under the name of the Sierra



Leone Company, which was to settle a colony at a place of this name in Africa, and thence diffuse light and knowledge over the neighbouring benighted regions.

The Company had here its directors, and in Sierra Leone its governor and council. The new government was soon supplied with subjects; for upwards of a thousand Free Blacks, to whom promises of land had been lavished, were imported from the northern part of America: year after year presented, however, to the Company, only reports filled with high swoln language on the civilisation of Africa, and a sad depreciation of its funds. The directors, with an unexampled degree of perseverance, stuck to their seats; nor did they leave them till the last report announced, that all they had received from the subscribers and from the government was gone, and that nothing remained to be done but to surrender their lands and territory into the hands of the latter. A considerable number of the subscribers, a little chagrined at this result, wished, at least, to be informed in what manner their funds had been dis-



sipated, and how the administration of the Colony had been conducted. For this purpose they requested, that a committee of proprietors might examine the whole of the concern from the beginning—They were outvoted, and the Company ceased to exist.

The causes of this untimely fate are not difficult to be ascertained. They began at the wrong end. Their language and expenditure was that of a great company with large territorial possessions, when their governor and council, and colony were inferior in respectability to the smallest corporation town in England. The arrival of the Blacks from America would have been of great use to a rising colony; but not only was nothing provided for them, but, after they had been landed, they found themselves deceived, and, consequently, became very unruly subjects. It is said, and it may easily be believed, that the governor and council were selected rather from their views of religion than from any knowledge of colonisation and government; and when they ought to have been engaged in the



discussion of parish boundaries and the allotment of lands, they were thinking only of the conversion of souls.

In whatever light the management of the affairs of this Company is considered, it cannot but excite suspicion, that they, who, with great means in their power, could produce no better effect, are little entitled to our confidence in the management of a much greater concern. If the affairs of a small colony were so ill conducted, what may not be dreaded, when the same persons take upon themselves to interfere with a large population, dispersed in various islands, and governed by different charters. The civilisation of Africa was the great object, when they had but a small spot, which they could not manage; what will be the result of their interference, when the Emancipation of the Blacks in the West Indies fills their minds? And, engrossed by the grand idea of procuring liberty for one part of our species, they seem to forget entirely what is due to their fellow subjects, who, inheriting the same colour with themselves, also entertain those



ideas of liberty and property, which are inseparably connected with the enjoyment of the British Constitution. The evil, with respect to Sierra Leone, and the subscribers to that ill managed concern, was of small magnitude. The subscribers lost their money, the directors their seats, the governor and council their consequence: but ill judged measures, with respect to the West India Islands, may be attended with more dangerous results. The murder of the planter, the conflagration of his plantations, the destruction of our settlements, are things not to be trifled with. It is not sufficient to suggest a probable benefit from an untried experiment; and the powerful arm of parliament is not to be raised when, if the thing were desirable, it ought to be carried into effect by the joint wisdom and well weighed approbation of the colonial legislatures.

But the regulation of the West India Islands comes before us under the sanction of another body, the African Institution. This was formed on the dissolution of the Sierra Leone Company; for, having been



unsuccessful in colonisation, several members of that Company devised the scheme of civilising Africa by a different process. No one can object to the plan of the African Institution; and it would be at least innocently employed, whilst it was engaged in exploring the deserts of Africa, or ascending to the source of the Niger. Sufficient scope was left, it might be thought, to the loftiest imagination, in contemplating the vast field open to its researches to the east of the Atlantick. Why are its labours interrupted in the pursuit of objects, three thousand miles from their proper scene of action? Surely the civilisation of Africa is a sufficiently noble theme, without embarrassing themselves with objects of such deep importance as must necessarily interfere with their professed engagements. But no! it is an African Institution, and the Slaves in the West Indies came originally from Africa; this brings them within its domain; and legislation is a delightful task, productive of more solid benefits than the traversing of dreary regions, and the production of



574  
reports, which will not pay the expense of publication. Whatever may be the pretensions of the African Institution, it assuredly goes out of the way, when it attempts to interfere with the West Indies: and the sanction of its name is ill bestowed on a purpose very foreign to that for which it was formed.

In considering the question coming before the legislature, it is necessary, that the mind should be divested of the prejudice that might arise in its favour on account of the high character, which the proposers of it assume to themselves. It is seen, that they have no right to it from their connection with the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade; from any degree of knowledge or prudence in the management of colonial concerns; or from their situation as members of the African Institution, in which, if they take an active part, it is to be presumed, that the other members have acquiesced in their schemes, rather from a prepossession in favour of the parties than from a due examination of their measures. But the gentlemen,



who have taken upon themselves gratuitously the regulation of the internal concerns of the West Indian Colonies, come forward with far stronger pretensions to public attention; founded indeed on what ought to be dearest to us all, a superior regard to that religion, which is outwardly professed in this country, and which every man, who takes upon himself the name of Christ, is bound to make the rule of his conduct. It is not a question now on the different modes of the Christian Worship: the appeal is brought home to the heart of every one; and, if it should appear, that the interference now proposed is founded on the Christian Religion, whatever might be the consequences, it is the bounden duty of every Christian to encourage it. The question, then, as it is pressed upon us, and is continually urged on our feelings as Christians, becomes one of very serious import, and deserves the strictest attention.

Slavery is an evil, considered in itself; but it has subsisted several thousand years in the world. Now we know, that nothing



evil could have been permitted to exist by an all-wise Being for its own sake, and therefore it must have arisen from causes, on the examination of which it will certainly appear, that the prevention of the operation of those causes would produce a greater evil than that which flowed from them. Idolatry has kept the minds of men in a far greater and more intolerable yoke of bondage than that which is felt by the Slaves in the West Indies ; and the corruptions of Christianity have excited the scorner to exclaim, that its introduction has produced greater evil than good to the world. But the eye of faith pierces through the gloom, which still hangs over the sinful race of man ; and he, who has entered into the sanctuary of God, reposes in confidence, that the ways of the Almighty will finally be made manifest, and his glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

When Joseph was sold for a Slave by his brethren, there cannot be a doubt of their wickedness ; and it was no small evil



to the sufferer, who had been brought up tenderly by his father in affluent circumstances, to wear the chains of slavery, and to suffer all the horrors of a prison. Yet the good resulting from this event was no less than the preservation of his father and all his family from the greater horrors of famine. Very false will be our judgments, if we examine events separately, and unconnected with what preceded and what followed them. What can be more dreadful than the history of a great part of Europe for the last twenty-five years : prisons filled with the victims of war ; scaffolds streaming with blood ; myriads of men chained to a musquet and tortured by military discipline. An inundation is viewed with horror, its ravages are dreadful ; yet fertility in time covers the fields that have been laid waste. There is a sickly species of humanity, that loves to dwell on the worst side of the picture : all is gloomy ; there is no contrast of light and shade ; the sufferings, not unfrequently imaginary, of the Slave are brought for-



ward ; it is not considered, that, if instances of cruelty occur, there are also kind, benevolent, and Christian masters.

But can there be a Christian master? Can a person seriously believing in the Christian religion hold his brother in bondage? In Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free. How then can a Christian retain his brother in slavery? In a truly constituted Christian meeting there can be no consideration of Freeman or Slave. All are equal, all are brethren. No distinction can be made between them on account of external circumstances. The apostle James sets this matter in the strongest light before us, shewing the impropriety there would be in any company of Christians, assembled for Christian purposes, giving a preference in station to one above another, on account of his superiority in rank of life, wealth, or exterior ornament. All, who are met together, are strictly brethren; and no one is worthy of a place in such an assembly, who would not follow the example of his Lord and Master, and wash, if necessary,



the feet of a disciple, whether bond or free. This is a hard saying, and who can bear it. Yet true it is, and even something similar to this may be seen in the institutions of common life. Freemasonry forbids any distinctive appellation in its lodges except that of brothers. All civil distinctions cease when the lodge is opened; an inferior person may discharge the highest offices in it; yet, when the members return to the world, the usual relations of life take place, and their assembling together is attended with no other effect than that of increased philanthropy. Such, but in a superior degree, is Christianity. It binds men together in spiritual union under one head; but it does not interfere in the least with their relations to each other in social or in civil life; or rather, it improves those relations, by making men better husbands, better fathers, better children, better subjects, better sovereigns, better slaves.

We are not left in this question to mere reasoning on the general tendency and intention of Christianity. Here, as in many other points, we find a line of conduct



chalked out to us in such a manner, that we cannot fail of seeing its full propriety. An incident often occurs, in the history of our religion, which, at first sight, appears of little importance; yet, on considering it attentively, it might seem, that it was purposely intended to afford instruction at a future period. Thus, in the account of the miracles of our Saviour, the cure of the mother of Peter's wife does not appear to carry any thing in it worthy of peculiar record; yet thence we learn that Peter was married, and the pretence for preventing the ministers of religion from marrying is shewn to be futile by the marriage of him, who is supposed to be peculiarly the head of that sect of Christians, which denies marriage to its officers. The dispute between Peter and Paul, in which Peter evidently was to be blamed, sets aside all pretensions to infallibility in the former or his successors. A similar incident throws light upon the subject of Slavery and the rights of masters to the services of their Slaves.

When Paul was at Rome, under a mild species of imprisonment, a fugitive Slave



heard his discourses, and was converted by him to Christianity. Thus he took upon himself that yoke which is easy, and that burthen which is light; but was he on this account freed from the Slavery from which he had escaped? Did Paul enter into a discussion with him on the Emancipation of the Slaves? Did he encourage him to conceive that all former obligations were at an end; that he was raised to an equality with his master in civil rights; and that to demand a slavish service would, on the part of the master, be a dereliction of Christian duty? Had such been the preaching of Paul, it would with justice have been said of him, that he was one of the persons turning the world upside down. He would have been a sower of sedition, and no blame could have attached to a government that took proper methods to prevent an insurrection among the Slaves.

But what was the conduct of Paul? We have it on record in one of the most beautiful letters that ever was composed, in which we see blended together all that



denotes the Christian with what is now usually combined with the character of a gentleman. Paul enters into no abstract questions on the nature of Slavery and the propriety of it under the Christian dispensation. He sends back the Slave to his master, promising, at the same time, to make good whatever injury he might have sustained from the fugitive. He does not claim the restoration of the Slave to liberty on account of his conversion to Christianity; but, on the contrary, insinuates in the most elegant manner, that the effect of this conversion was to bind him to his master in a better manner for ever. The pardon of the Slave was the request of a friend to a friend; and, in spite of the declamations used against the holders of Slaves, let us not doubt that there may be, in the present days, many, to whom the epithet of friend would not be denied by the apostle. The letter is worthy of a perusal by every one interested in the present question. It proves decisively, that the Christian teachers of the earliest times never interfered with the civil regulations



respecting Slaves. They had higher duties to perform, and foresaw in what manner the Emancipation was to be effected; not by raising an outcry against the holders of Slaves, nor by exciting, in the latter, animosity towards their masters; but by instilling into both parties the precepts of Christianity; inculcating on the Slave the performance of his duties from a higher principle than that of slavish fear or of slavish obsequiousness; and teaching the master to have compassion on his Slave, because both had a Master in Heaven.

Such a doctrine surely cannot be found fault with in the West Indies, yet a heavy charge is brought against the Planters, not merely for neglecting to instruct their Slaves in these duties, but of obstructing the efforts of others, who would inculcate on their minds the principles of the Christian religion. From the former part of this charge it may not be easy to exculpate the Planter, any more than many a householder in this country. There is without doubt a diversity of character among the



planters : all are not equally attentive to their religious duties : but, whether we scrutinise the conduct of the planter abroad or the rich landholder at home, it becomes us to beware of a censorious spirit. Neither one nor the other will become the better for intemperate language. The masters of slaves abroad and the masters of servants at home, are both acting against their own interest, if they do not, to the utmost of their power, assist in the moral and religious improvement of their dependents. More, assuredly, may be done than is done ; but the prying eye of hypocritical curiosity into the concerns of another man's family is not to be encouraged. Let each attend to his own duties, and remember the precept of our Saviour, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

The charge of obstruction is of a more serious nature, and it is one very difficult to be investigated ; for persons of a certain turn may call that obstruction, which, in every decent family in England, would be considered absolutely necessary with respect to their own servants. That they



should be at liberty, at certain times, to attend the religious worship, which is the most acceptable to them, cannot be doubted: but this liberty must be kept within certain bounds, and it should not interfere with the accustomed order and regularity of the family. It would be but a bad excuse for late hours, that the servants had been employed in religious duties; for there is no telling to what a degree of licentiousness such an indulgence might be carried: and, if this is necessary in serious families in England, how much more is it incumbent on the planter to take care, that his Slaves should not, on the pretext of religion, attend nocturnal assemblies, from which considerable danger may be apprehended. We know, that a truly Christian meeting cannot be at all injurious to the interests of the planter; but we know also, that every thing belonging to a Christian meeting can be managed at suitable times, open to the eye of the master, and necessarily conducted with that order, decency, and propriety, which are inseparable from Christian communion.



In most if not all of the West India Islands are provisions for public worship, according to the forms established in this country by law; in many are meetings of dissenters. The places of worship are, as in this country, open to all. The same distinctions prevail as with us: the upper class have their appropriate seats; the poor get them as they can, or stand in the open spaces. From none of these places are the Slaves excluded. How far they are adapted for their religious instruction it is not easy to determine. Probably, the same diversity prevails as in England, from the cold morality of a philosophic system, in which Christ is scarcely named, to the utmost wildness of speculations, derived from laborious volumes of scholastic theology.

That the planter should be alarmed at some doctrines of the latter class can easily be credited. He may with reason be afraid, that the heads of his Slaves should be turned; for, if the freaks of the Jumpers, in Wales, may be harmless in a district where the majority of the inhabitants are impressed with more sober views



of religion, this might not be the case on a plantation, where can be but few to stem the torrent of fanaticism. One class of Christians has met, we believe, with great success among the Slaves, and encouragement from the masters. This is the Moravian, which, whatever faults we may find in some parts of its theological system, excels in its mode of inculcating industry, sobriety, economy, every moral virtue, and leads the mind of both Freeman and Slave to aim at the fruits of the spirit, love, joy, and mutual forbearance.

Assuredly it were to be wished, that in no case had zeal overleaped the bounds of prudence; that the genuine doctrines of Christianity, separated from the impure dross of vain philosophy, were everywhere the themes of religious instruction. Who can be offended at Paul's doctrine, that God made of one blood all nations, to dwell upon the surface of the earth; and that, from the palest white to the blackest jet, all are viewed with equal eye by our Heavenly Father? Whatever prejudices may exist, if they indeed are to be deno-



minated prejudices, respecting colour, surely that beautiful epitome of Christianity, given by Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, cannot be too often impressed on Slave and Freeman. Both derive their origin from Adam; both may claim relationship to a common Saviour; both must submit to the general law of nature; and, after the dissolution of the animal body, succeeds to each a spiritual body. Can this great doctrine of consolation be denied to the Slave? Will it injure his master's interests, that, looking forward to a future life, he thinks less of the cares and pains of this; and that, by the exercise of Christian virtue, he prepares himself for the society of just men made perfect? However men may dispute on various speculative points, these plain and obvious truths cannot but meliorate the character, whether of a Freeman or a Slave. To feel, that our spirit holds in this world communion with the Father of Spirits, and that, in the next, this will be exalted to a degree far beyond our present comprehension, will lighten the chains of Slavery; and, if



in ancient times philosophy could elevate, in an Epictetus and an Æsop, the mind of a Slave, it cannot be doubted, that the nobler views, afforded to us by Christianity, of the present and the future life, will equally overcome the difficulties, supposed, but erroneously, to be attached to a slavish condition.

It is true, that these sublime truths are not held in high estimation by many persons in exalted stations in the old world; and the eventful times in which we live afford but too strong proofs of the fatal effects attending the depreciation by some, and the rejection by others, of the jewel committed to their charge. Hence it ill becomes this part of the world to cast reflections on the inhabitants of other climes. Let us take the mote out of our own, before we arrogate to ourselves with such presumption the right of plucking the beam out of the eye of our neighbours. Sufficient allowance is not made for the state of society in the West Indies; and one would suppose, in reading the insinuations thrown out against



the planters, that the condition of the Slaves under their care had met with no amelioration from the time that they were first imported into our islands. But who is there that, on a candid examination of the subject, will not see, that the condition of a Slave in the West Indies is far superior to that of an African in bondage in his own country. Indeed, the horrors of the passage to Africa were compensated, in the opinion of one of the most benevolent men in this country, by the advantage to the survivors in the improvements of civilisation: and, however degraded the West Indian Slave may appear in the eyes of one brought up in England, the comparison is not just between the body of Slaves in our islands, and the bulk of our poor at home, but in the present condition of the Slaves, with what it would have been had they remained in Africa.

It happened to the writer, in an early stage of the Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, to witness a scene, which is not perhaps uncommon. This was the parting of two female Slaves from their



young master, to whose care he had been confided in his passage from Jamaica. They had been told, that by landing in England they were free, and that it would be the highest degree of folly to return again to the absolute dominion of their master. But with whatever eyes we may contemplate slavery, these women balanced their condition with that of the servants of the house, to whom even their dress was an object of envy, in a very different manner. They rejected the proposal with scorn: their great desire was to return to their supposed chains; and the tear fell from their eyes only on account of their young master, of whom they took the most affectionate farewell.

It may be said, that these were domestic Slaves, and that the language used by the present advocates for the rights of humanity refers only to those, who are employed in the laborious exercises of the field. Be it so. But then we must recollect, that the number of domestic Slaves in the West Indies is very considerable, and their increased comforts will diminish



much the sum of affliction and oppression, under which the whole body of Slaves is supposed to labour. With respect also to the Field Slaves, it might be imagined, on reading the representations too wantonly given of their condition, that theirs was a life of uniform injury; that they were daily smarting under the lash of their driver; and that such a thing as domestic comfort was unknown to them; that they had nothing which they could call their own; and that the depression of their spirits kept pace with the wretched state of their bodies. Yet how does this tally with the appearance of a Negro market, with the pictures of their dances, with the money accumulated by many to redeem themselves from Slavery, and the property bequeathed at their deaths to their families, which is ever deemed sacred by the master. Their huts differ from each other, as do the cottages of the poor in England; perhaps the worst of them will find a parallel in some of the hovels, which are inhabited by our own countrymen; but the beastliness of an Irishman's den



would turn the stomach of the supposed outcasts of humanity in the West Indies. Whence is it, that the eye of sensibility is so piercing in regions beyond the Atlantick, yet has not a tear to bestow on the miseries of our brethren immediately within its ken!

It is not by this meant to be insinuated, that there is no room for improvement in the condition of the West Indian Slaves. Much has been and much remains to be done. The Boors in Poland, and the Slaves in Russia, are assuredly not to be placed on the same level with the poor of our own country; and their gradual improvement is viewed with satisfaction by all, who take a pleasure in contemplating the effects of increasing knowledge and better principles; yet it must be a work of time to elevate them to all the rights of freemen, and too great precipitation would only retard instead of accelerating the march of freedom. In the same manner, if we wish to raise the Black Population to a higher degree in the scale of nature, it must be done by those causes, which



operate on both Master and Slave ; not by a rude interposition between them, which may fill the mind of the latter with false expectations, and certainly have a tendency to excite fearful apprehensions as to the life and property of the former.

Besides the Slaves in our islands there is a considerable population of those, who, though Blacks, are Freemen, and these are either such as are born of free parents, or have been emancipated by their masters. In reading the accounts, that have lately been propagated of the West Indies, it should seem, that the whole of this population is living in perpetual terrour of Slavery ; for, if a Black is taken up, and any one, according to this account, may be taken up as a fugitive Slave, if he cannot produce the documents of his free state, he is liable to be sold. If the gentlemen, who give us these representations, were to travel into a neighbouring country, and to leave their passports behind them, they might be in equal danger of being detained, and perhaps kept in close confinement ; but the recovery of their



documents could not be difficult, and might probably give them just as much trouble as the free Black would experience in procuring the copy of his freedom. Different countries have different regulations ; and it is evident, that, in an island where are three classes ; those of Whites, the rulers ; of free Blacks ; and of Slaves ; there must be regulations, which are not necessary in such a country as this, where, in the eye of the law, all are equal. A sufficient evidence of the little danger to be apprehended by a free Black from these regulations, exists in the number of that class in our islands ; the propriety of some regulation is manifest, from the danger there would be in fugitive Slaves, who have, perhaps, left their district on the commission of some crimes, being suffered to be at large.

In the whole course, indeed, of the exaggerated complaints against the planters, the nature of the internal government of the island is entirely forgotten. This is in general by a governor and council, and house of representatives : the governor and



council are appointed by the crown, and the governor is, in general, if not always, a native of this side of the Atlantick. Now, whatever may be the prejudices of the Whites in the West Indies, it cannot be supposed, that the governors will be universally infected by them: and besides, as all the laws in the colonies require the ratification of the king in council at home, the same prejudice will scarcely lead to sanction laws of such inhumanity, as is made the subject of complaint. Probably it may be found, in raking among the statutes of the colonies, that absurd laws, or at least laws which appear at present absurd, have been enacted in the colonial legislatures, and sanctioned by the king in council. But is our own statute book free from the same censure? How long is it since the pretended crime of witchcraft was punished in this island capitally, and the existence of witches maintained by grave judges? And it is within these few years that a number of persons were prosecuted and convicted at Huntingdon for treating in the most cruel manner a



poor woman at Great Paxton in that county, on the suspicion of being a witch. Had an Obeah Slave been used in the same manner by Whites in any of the West India Islands, it would have been brought in evidence of the general cruel treatment of Slaves; but Englishmen are not to be judged by the delinquencies of a few of their countrymen, nor are the planters to be universally condemned because some of that body have been guilty of crimes.

These observations on the state of the Blacks in our islands have been occasioned by the present attempt to introduce a bill into parliament for a general register of all the Slaves; one copy to be kept in the island, and one in this country. It is intended, according to the authors of the scheme, to prevent the illicit trade in Slaves, and to secure the freedom of all Blacks who are not Slaves. The experiment has been begun in certain islands lately ours by conquest, and which have not, under British dominion, possessed local legislatures; and before any thing can be de-



terminated on the result of the measure, the projectors wish it to be established over all the islands by the authority of parliament. The bill is drawn up with all that technicality of law, which seems intended to make it intelligible only to the profession; and to that assuredly it holds out the prospect of a plentiful harvest. From the nature of such things, and the necessity of an establishment to receive the numerous documents, to which this bill will give rise, it is not unreasonable to imagine, that the job will, and is intended to be very productive to some of the projectors.

To enter into an examination of the bill in all its details would carry us far beyond our present purpose. It is against the introduction of it into the legislature that we contend, and that not only on account of its essential defects, but as it is evidently the beginning of a series of measures, by which the planters in the West Indies will be kept in perpetual anxiety. The projectors, having once tasted the sweets of their legislation, will not be content with this interference: the first fruits



will be only a specimen of the future harvest. Their intention is evidently to hurry on to the completion of their favourite scheme, the speedy Emancipation of the Blacks : and, if their designs are not frustrated, it will be in vain hereafter for the planter to enter into competition with them.

Far be from us the wish to controul any generous effort for future emancipation, whether of Black or White. The great object of the religion we profess is emancipation, the emancipation of the human mind from the bondage of sin. That baneful disease is as dangerous under the scarlet robe or the glittering crown, as in squalid garments and a body galled by chains. Enough is to be done nearer home, and the Irish peasant has claims upon us equal at least with those of our brethren of a different colour. But, in the pursuit of our object, great care must be taken not to overstep the bounds of Christian prudence. We know who has taught us, that we should be wise as serpents and innocent as doves ; and that we are not to do evil



that good may come. There is so much of the wisdom of the serpent apparent in the proposed measure, and in the mode of conducting it, that we may justly be fearful of his sting: and the good to be expected from it is more than counterbalanced by the evil passions engendered in its progress.

That a Bill of a similar nature has already been introduced into three of our colonies is so far from being an argument for its extension over the whole of the West Indies, that on the contrary it ought to make us pause before we try the experiment on so large a scale. Let the beneficial effects of the measure be first seen in these islands: as yet it can scarcely be said to be in action. Allow the planters time to see the working of it, and when it shall be known to be perfectly compatible with the interests of both Master and Slave, the projectors may present their schemes with confidence to the West India legislatures.

Upon the whole, the anxiety of the planter is not without just foundation. The measure in itself, the manner in which it is pursued, and the character of the pro-



jecters, are all calculated to raise in his mind fearful apprehensions. The latter circumstance, the character of the projecters, is by no means of the smallest importance. It has been seen, that their pretensions, either from their former connection with the Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, their present connection with the African Institution, or their supposed superior views of humanity or Christianity are unfounded. Of their ultimate object, the Emancipation of the Blacks, they are incompetent judges; and, if their views had been of the purest nature, still they have proved themselves unfit persons to be entrusted with the care of legislation. Strenuous as were the exertions of the writer in the cause of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, and strong as is his present conviction of the propriety of that measure, he has seen too much not to deprecate the present interference in the internal government of the colonies; and, desirous of promoting to the utmost of his power the melioration of his species, of whatever colour and whatever clime, he



cannot be blind to the effects of zeal untempered by discretion and charity, and which, out of tenderness to the Blacks, may consign both Blacks and Whites to a common destruction.

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### POSTSCRIPT.

AFTER the above was written, a friend communicated to the author the Report of the Honourable House of Assembly of Jamaica, relative to the Bill, by which the registering of the Slaves is to be regulated by our legislature. Every thing advanced in this pamphlet is fully corroborated by the arguments in the Report, and an ample body of testimony, which accompanies it. But, as this occupies a hundred folio pages, it is to be feared, that not a few members of our own legislature may be deterred, by its length, from giving that attention to every part of it, which the importance of the subject demands. No one, however, can arise from an impartial perusal of the Report, without a complete conviction in



his mind, that the Assembly from which it originated, and which has given its sanction to it, is the best calculated to regulate the condition of the Slaves under its government; and that the assistance required from our parliament is not only unnecessary, but in the highest degree impolitic and injurious to the cause, which so high an authority is called upon to promote.

The Report shows the iniquity of the proposed law under the following heads: —

“ 1st, It subverts the established constitution of the country, and assumes the power of regulating and disposing, to the extent even of total forfeiture, of the most important part of the property of the inhabitants, without their consent by their representatives; and that power is given to a single officer, who may be of the lowest description, and of character altogether degraded.

“ 2d, It violates the pledge given by the statute of the 18th of Geo. III, cap. 12, and imposes a heavy contribution, to be applied without the consent of the General Assembly; and also gives this power



to the Governor, and apparently to the Commander in Chief, who is now a distinct character.

“ 3d, It institutes inquisitions into the tenure of property held by individuals, and compels them to disclose their title to Slaves on their own oath, which may be made use of in the courts of law to their prejudice in questions of doubtful right.

“ 4th, It deprives the inhabitants of trial by jury, and enables a single officer to reduce the most opulent planter to beggary, by rejecting his return, and manumitting all the Slaves on his estate, without redress, but by action against a person, who may be worth nothing, to answer the damages.’

Two allegations are brought forward by the projectors of the Bill; first, that there has been an illicit and clandestine importation of Slaves into the island; and, second, that Negroes, Mulattoes, and Mestees, lawfully entitled to their freedom, are kept in Slavery. The first is repelled by a body of evidence given by the admiral on the station, four captains of the navy, several collectors and comptrollers of his majesty’s



customs, and the judge of the vice admiralty court. With respect to the second, the committee, which drew up the Report “solemnly affirms, that such practices have no existence in this island to any extent. We do not say, that solitary instances of injustice have not taken place here, as in all other societies, composed of imperfect human beings; but we do mean to aver, that, when such injustice has occurred, it has met the marked indignation of the community. Vestries, as public bodies, and individuals have come forward to assist the party claiming the right to be free; and in no case have such parties found difficulties in asserting and establishing their freedom. There are laws to protect Negroes, Mulattoes, and Mestees in the enjoyment of their freedom, and to assist them in its recovery, adequate to these important objects. Such laws are fairly and impartially administered.”

It will be roundly asserted by the projectors, that though there are protecting laws, yet such is the character of a White Jury, that a Black man has no chance be-



fore it. Upon this head the attorney general of the island states, " that, during fifteen years practice at the bar, he had never known nor heard of a case, in which a bias against the plaintiff, on the part of the court or jury, was even suspected ; and he believes that plaintiffs, in actions of that nature, enter the courts of law with confidence that they shall meet with a fair trial. He expresses his confidence, that a Black person, who contends for his freedom in an action of *homine replegiundo* before a Jamaica jury, has as fair play for his demand as a suitor before an English jury would have for his character or fortune. He thinks he may say, that he has invariably remarked, that the feeling of the jury has gone with the plaintiff ; and an advocate for the defendant in such a cause would, in his judgement, not act discreetly in even hinting at any supposed general policy as a ground for resisting the plaintiff's individual claim ; and he is satisfied, that, if he were to make a serious stand upon that ground, with a view of turning the scale against the plaintiff in a doubtful case,



he would expose himself to the indignation of every part of his audience."

The Report takes a view of Slavery as it has been allowed by divine and human legislatures; and, on the gradual amelioration of it since the introduction of Christianity into Europe, makes the following appropriate deduction:—"That time, and the regular course of human affairs, will accomplish, in the British colonies, what they brought about in the Roman empire, and in modern Europe, without direct legal enactments and little assistance from any positive institutions. Let us contrast the conduct of these modern reformers with their own cases. Seven years had hardly elapsed since the importation of Slaves into the West Indies had ceased. The Savages, with which they had been overstocked by the avarice of the British traders, during the last period of the intercourse, were of a description much inferior to those who had formerly been received, and were barbarous beyond the usual ferocity of Africans. Yet, because in this short space great progress has not been made in accomplishing



the objects, which required as many centuries in the Roman empire, and had only a commencement, by depriving the master of the power of life and death, after the expiration of two hundred years, the colonists are stigmatised as unwilling and unable to contribute to that gradual amelioration, which alone can be safe to them or useful to the Negroes; and it is proposed immediately to disfranchise them of rights, which they have enjoyed at least for a century and a half; and that a body, unacquainted with local circumstances, without the possibility of obtaining accurate information, and who, from geographical position, can receive neither petitions nor representations, shall assume the sole control of this most important part of their internal affairs."

The great amelioration of the condition of the Blacks took place in the year 1784. At that time the killing of a Slave was made punishable with death. The ill treatment of them rendered the offender liable to punishment according to the nature of the case. "No Slave could receive more than



thirty-nine lashes for any offence on any account in one day, nor can the punishment be repeated until the delinquent has recovered." One day in every fortnight, exclusive of Sundays, is allowed for the cultivation of their own grounds, and other similar regulations were made, evidently proving, that a disposition generally prevailed to introduce, by degrees, every thing that was suited to their condition and compatible with a state of Slavery.

It may not be amiss to contrast with the law restraining the number of stripes to that authorized by the divine code, the punishment which prevailed in this civilised country, and which has, we fear even to the present day, its abettors. Since the year 1784 how many Whites have been dragged to the halberts, and received a thousand lashes ! The writer was witness to a military flagellation only a few years ago, when several delinquents were subjected, one after another, to this discipline, in which none received so few as thirty-nine, and one received five hundred lashes. Thirty-nine lashes would have been pro-



bably thought sufficient by every planter for the punishment of a Slave under similar circumstances with the delinquents, except one, who was guilty of desertion, and who received for that offence five hundred lashes. The question since that time has been brought before the British legislature, which saw the danger of interfering with military discipline: but an amelioration has taken place in our army; so much so, that a flogging colonel is held in the same estimation by his brother officers as a cruel planter is in the West Indies.

It is not by this meant to be insinuated, that the officers, who stand over the writhings of the wretched sufferers are more inhuman than the rest of their countrymen; and it is not generally known, that among the tortures invented by the ingenuity of man, not one is superior to that which has been suffered by an individual when the arm of the executioner is arrested by the person appointed to gauge the feelings of humanity. Yet, when the cruelty of the West Indies is so loudly inveighed against, a question may fairly arise



whether the accumulated sufferings by flagellation of the numerous Blacks in our colonies within this century are equal to those which have been experienced in the same time by the army of England. Well did the divine code set a limit to this species of punishment, the nature of which was not understood by the writer, till he had consulted one of the most eminent surgeons in London upon this subject. Since that time the proper reverse to a well known medal seemed to him to be, the halberts with the cat'o'nine tails, and a soldier kneeling before an officer, uttering these words, Am I not also a man and a brother?

To distribute, or to aid in the distribution of such a medal amongst the soldiers of our country is far from the wish or intention of the writer. Flagellation is a necessary punishment both in our army and in the West Indies : and in both cases instances may be adduced of a rigour, that must be deplored by every friend to humanity. But, to invelope in one stigma the whole body of British Officers and of West India Planters is a mode of conduct



which no pretensions to Christianity or humanity would justify. If either a planter or an officer uses the lash too freely, let him not be spared; let all the censures from the laws of God or man fall upon him; but do not stigmatize all our regiments and all our plantations for actions, confined only to a few, and held in abhorrence by the rest.

The progress of the amelioration of the Blacks, and the evils to be apprehended from them, were the proposed Bill carried into a law, would occupy too much space in these pages; but one point cannot be passed over without some observation: "The subject of religion, and the best method of introducing genuine Christianity in the mild and beneficent spirit of its founder, is of so great importance, that the committee decline going deep into it at present; but recommend, that early in the next session a committee may be appointed, for the special purpose of discussing and considering the most eligible manner of diffusing religious information amongst that class of society. The Assembly has



always been against communicating to them the dark and dangerous fanaticism of the Methodists, which, grafted on the African superstitions, and the general temperament of Negroes in a state of bondage, has produced, and must continue to produce, the most fatal consequences."

By this dangerous fanaticism of the Methodists is probably meant, that gloomy system of philosophy introduced among professing Christians in the fourth century by an African bishop; who, after a life of dissipation, became a convert to the corrupted faith of his times, with which he blended the fictions derived from the temple of Moloch, formerly the established worship of his country. At the reformation they passed through the retort of a hot headed and sanguinary reformer, and this sublimed spirit has intoxicated numerous bodies in Europe. Well may the West Indians dread the introduction of such a maddening draught among minds uncultivated, and whose imaginations, as is natural to beings approaching nearer to the savage state, would be lost in the maze of



doctrines and dogmas, by which the learned are so completely bewildered.

But Methodism is a charge of a very general nature; and, like other terms of a similar import, is thrown at random upon those, whose method of life is in opposition to that of the persons, who deal in this kind of invective. Thus the scorner, in whom is no vital principle of religion, sneers at every action of the man, who makes it the rule of his life; and, if the latter is guilty of indiscretions, they are blazoned forth in the blackest colours, whilst intemperance, corruption, dishonesty, debauchery, are passed over in the man of the world as venial offences. To such a length has this gone, that family worship, private devotion, reverence for the holy name of God in conversation, habitual attention to the Holy Scriptures, are stigmatised as the marks of Methodism: and, if some have carried the observance of the day of rest into the borders of Pharisaical minutiae, to dedicate even a portion of it to the duties of religion, to conversation on sacred topics, to abstrac-



tion from worldly affairs, fixes on the most cheerful mind this terrible charge. The true Christian cannot be carried away by these idle censures; and unhappy is the man, whether in high or low life, who cannot withdraw himself from the world, and avail himself of the great privilege he might enjoy of conversing with his Maker. If our methods are founded on true evangelical principles, and display themselves in love, joy, mutual forbearance, universal benevolence, without partiality, without hypocrisy, the world may call us perverse, for it gave the same calumnious epithet to our Master. The world knoweth its own, and the Master of the world best knoweth, also, who are his. The day cometh, when the actions of all will be made manifest; and however a man may drive the thought from his mind, yet it will occur — In what do I place my confidence? If on the world, or the things of the world, the bubble will burst; and, when man stands alone with his Creator, happy they who know themselves to be his sons, and can address him with confidence as their Heavenly Father!



Sensible of the danger of fanaticism on the one hand, and irreligion on the other, the House of Assembly unanimously voted, that, early in the next session, "it will take into consideration the state of Religion among the Slaves, and carefully investigate the means of diffusing the light of genuine Christianity." In this noble effort, every true Christian must wish them success; praying that, as far as human means can succeed, they may be enabled to promote the good work, and to introduce among their Slaves the genuine principles of our holy religion. The difficulties are apparently very great: on the one hand, from the nature of the population to be instructed; on the other, from the apparent want of means suited to their instruction. Whatever opinion may be entertained of the excellence of European institutions on this head, it is evident, that they are not applicable to the state of the Negroes, to whose minds Christianity must be presented freed from the disputes of the old world. They must be fed with milk, not with strong drink.



Fanaticism is dangerous on the one hand; indifferentism is no less pernicious on the other. The assembly has opened for itself a noble career, may its labours be attended with success, and prove its members to be true disciples of our Lord and Saviour.

T H E E N D.