

The

# CABINET OF FREEDOM

under the supervision of

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“AMINO A MAN AND A BROTHER”



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THE HISTORY  
OF THE  
RISE, PROGRESS, AND ACCOMPLISHMENT  
OF THE  
ABOLITION  
OF THE  
AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE,  
BY THE  
BRITISH PARLIAMENT.

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BY THOMAS CLARKSON, M. A.

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## CONTENTS OF THE THIRD VOLUME.

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	PAGE.
<b>CHAPTER I.</b>	
Continuation from July, 1790, to July, 1791—Author travels again—Examinations on the side of the abolition resumed in the Commons—List of those examined—Cruel circumstances of the times—Motion for the abolition of the trade—Debates—Motion lost—Resolutions of the Committee—Sierra Leone Company established. . . . .	5
<b>CHAPTER II.</b>	
Continuation from July, 1791, to July, 1792—Author travels again—People begin to leave off sugar—Petition Parliament—Motion renewed in the Commons—Debates—Abolition resolved upon, but not to commence till 1796—The Lords determine upon hearing evidence on the resolution—This evidence introduced—Further hearing of it postponed to the next session. . . . .	117
<b>CHAPTER III.</b>	
Continuation from July, 1792, to July, 1793—Author travels again—Motion to renew the resolution of the last year in the Commons—Motion lost—New motion to abolish the foreign Slave-trade—Motion lost—Proceedings of the Lords. . . . .	202
<b>CHAPTER IV.</b>	
Continuation from July, 1793, to July, 1794—Author travels again—Motion to abolish the foreign Slave-trade renewed and carried—but lost in the Lords—Further proceedings there—Author, on account of declining health, obliged to retire from the cause. . . . .	205

## CHAPTER V.

Continuation from July, 1794, to July, 1799—Various motions within this period. . . . . 210

## CHAPTER VI.

Continuation from July, 1799, to July, 1805—Various motions within this period. . . . . 223

## CHAPTER VII.

Continuation from July, 1805 to July, 1806—Author, restored, joins the Committee again—Death of Mr. Pitt—Foreign Slave-trade abolished—Resolution to take measures for the total abolition of the trade—Address to the King to negotiate with foreign powers for their concurrence in it—Motion to prevent new vessels going into the trade—all these carried through both Houses of Parliament. . . 232

## CHAPTER VIII.

Continuation from July, 1806, to July, 1807—Death of Mr. Fox—Bill for the total abolition carried in the Lords—Sent from thence to the Commons—amended, and passed there, and sent back to the Lords—receives the royal assent—Reflections on this great event. . . . . 279

THE  
HISTORY OF THE ABOLITION  
OF THE  
SLAVE-TRADE.

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CHAPTER I.

CONTINUATION FROM JULY, 1790, TO JULY, 1791—AUTHOR TRAVELS AGAIN THROUGHOUT THE KINGDOM—OBJECT OF HIS JOURNEY—MOTION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS TO RESUME THE HEARING OF EVIDENCE IN FAVOR OF THE ABOLITION—LIST OF ALL THOSE EXAMINED ON THIS SIDE OF THE QUESTION—MACHINATIONS OF INTERESTED PERSONS, AND CRUEL CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE TIMES PREVIOUSLY TO THE DAY OF DECISION—MOTION AT LENGTH MADE FOR STOPPING ALL FURTHER IMPORTATION OF SLAVES FROM AFRICA—DEBATES UPON IT—MOTION LOST—RESOLUTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE-TRADE—ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SIERRA LEONE COMPANY.

It was a matter of deep affliction to us to think, that the crimes and sufferings inseparable from the Slave-trade were to be continued to another year. And yet it was our duty, in the present moment, to acquiesce in the postponement of the question. This postponement was not now for the purpose of delay, but of securing victory. The evidence, on the side of the abolition, was, at the end of the last session, but half finished. It was impossible, for the sake of Africa, that we could have then closed it. No other opportunity might offer in parliament for establishing an indelible record in her favor, if we were to neglect

the present. It was our duty, therefore, even to wait to complete it, and to procure such a body of evidence, as should not only bear us out in the approaching contest, but such as, if we were to fail, would bear out our successors also. It was possible, indeed, if the inhabitants of our islands were to improve in civilization, that the poor slaves might experience gradually an improved treatment with it; and so far, testimony now might not be testimony for ever: but it was utterly impossible, while the Slave-trade lasted, and the human passions continued to be the same, that there should be any change for the better in Africa; or that any modes, less barbarous, should come into use for procuring slaves. Evidence therefore, if once collected on this subject, would be evidence for posterity. In the midst of these thoughts another journey occurred to me as necessary for this purpose; and I prayed that I might have strength to perform it in the most effectual manner; and that I might be daily impressed, as I travelled along, with the stimulating thought, that the last hope for millions might possibly rest upon my own endeavors.

The committee highly approved of this journey. Mr. Wilberforce saw the absolute necessity of it also; and had prepared a number of questions, with great ingenuity, to be put to such persons as might have information to communicate. These I added to those in the tables, which have been already mentioned; and they made together a valuable collection on the subject.

This tour was the most vexatious of any I had yet undertaken; many still refused to come forward to be examined, and some on the most frivolous pretences; so that I was disgusted, as I journeyed on, to find how little men were disposed to make sacrifices for so great a cause. In one part of it, I went over nearly two thousand miles, receiving repeated refusals. I had not secured one witness within this distance. This was truly disheartening. I was subject to the whims and the caprice of those whom I solicited on these occasions.\* To these I was obliged to accommodate myself. When at Edinburgh, a person who could have given me material information, declined seeing me, though he really wished well to the cause. When I had returned southward as far as York, he changed his mind; and he would then see me. I went back, that I might not lose him. When I arrived, he would give me only private information. Thus I travelled, backwards and forwards, four hundred miles to no purpose. At another place a circumstance almost similar happened, though with a different issue. I had been for two years writing about a person, whose testimony was important. I had passed once through the town in which he lived; but he would not then see me. I passed through it now, but no entreaties of his friends could make him alter his resolution. He was a man highly respectable as to situation in life; but of consider-

\* Ten or twelve of those who were examined, much to their honor, came forward of their own accord.

able vanity. I said, therefore, to my friend, on leaving the town, You may tell him that I expect to be at Nottingham in a few days; and though it be a hundred and fifty miles distant, I will even come back to see him, if he will dine with me on my return. A letter from my friend announced to me, when at Nottingham, that his vanity had been so gratified by the thought of a person coming expressly to visit him from such a distance, that he would meet me according to my appointment. I went back. We dined together. He yielded to my request. I was now repaid; and I returned towards Nottingham in the night. These circumstances I mention, and I feel it right to mention them, that the reader may be properly impressed with the great difficulties we found in collecting a body of evidence, in comparison with our opponents. They ought never to be forgotten; for if with the testimony, picked up as it were under all these disadvantages, we carried our object against those who had almost numberless witnesses to command, what must have been the merits of our cause! No person can indeed judge of the severe labor and trials in these journeys. In the present, I was out four months. I was almost over the whole island. I intersected it backwards and forwards both in the night and in the day. I travelled nearly seven thousand miles in this time, and I was able to count upon twenty new and willing evidences.

Having now accomplished my object, Mr. Wilberforce moved on the fourth of February in the



house of commons, that a committee be appointed to examine further witnesses in behalf of the abolition of the Slave-trade. This motion was no sooner made, than Mr. Cawthorne rose, to our great surprise, to oppose it. He took upon himself to decide, that the house had heard evidence enough. This indecent motion was not without its advocates. Mr. Wilberforce set forth the injustice of this attempt; and proved, that out of eighty-one days, which had been given up to the hearing of evidence, the witnesses against the abolition had occupied no less than fifty-seven. He was strenuously supported by Mr. Burke, Mr. Martin, and other respectable members. At length, the debate ended in favor of the original motion, and a committee was appointed accordingly.

The examinations began again on February the seventh, and continued till April the fifth, when they were finally closed. In this, as in the former session, Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. William Smith principally conducted them; and indeed it was necessary that they should have been present at these times; for it is, perhaps, difficult to conceive the illiberal manner in which our witnesses were treated by those on the other side of the question. Men, who had left the trade upon principle, and who had come forward, against their apparent interest, to serve the cause of humanity and justice, were looked upon as mercenaries and culprits, or as men of doubtful and suspicious character. They were brow-beaten.

Unhandsome questions were put to them. Some were kept for four days under examination. It was, however, highly to their honor, that they were found in no one instance to prevaricate, nor to waver as to the certainty of their facts.

But this treatment, hard as it was for them to bear, was indeed good for the cause; for, coming thus pure out of the fire, they occasioned their own testimony, when read, to bear stronger marks of truth than that of the generality of our opponents; nor was it less superior, when weighed by other considerations. For the witnesses against the abolition were principally interested. They who were not, had been hospitably received at the planters' tables. The evidence, too, which they delivered, was almost wholly negative. They had not seen such and such evils. But this was no proof that the evils did not exist. The witnesses, on the other hand, who came up in favor of the abolition, had no advantage in making their several assertions. In some instances, they came up against their apparent interest; and, to my knowledge, suffered persecution for so doing. The evidence, also, which they delivered, was of a positive nature. They gave an account of specific evils, which had come under their own eyes. These evils were never disproved. They stood therefore on a firm basis, as on a tablet of brass. Engraved there in affirmative characters, a few of them were of more value than all the negative and airy testimony which had been advanced on the other side of the question.

That the public may judge, in some measure, of the respectability of the witnesses in favor of the abolition, and that they may know also to whom Africa is so much indebted for her deliverance, I shall subjoin their names in the three following lists. The first, will contain those who were examined by the privy council only; the second, those who were examined by the privy council and the house of commons also; and the third, those who were examined by the house of commons only.

LIST I.

Andrew Spaarman, physician, botanist, and successor to Linnæus, traveller on discovery in Africa for the king of Sweden.

Reverend Isham Baggs, chaplain for two voyages to Africa in H. M. ship *Grampus*.

Captain James Bowen, of the royal navy, one voyage to Africa.

Mr. William James, a master in the royal navy, three voyages as mate of a slave-vessel.

Mr. David Henderson, gunner of H. M. ship *Centurion*, three voyages to Africa.

Harry Gandy, two voyages to Africa, as captain of a slave vessel.

Thomas Eldred, two voyages there, as mate.

James Arnold, three voyages there, as surgeon and surgeon's mate.

Thomas Deane, two voyages there, as captain of a wood and ivory ship.

LIST II.

Major-general Rooke, commander of Goree, in Africa.

Henry Hew Dalrymple, esquire, lieutenant of the 75th regiment at Goree, and afterwards in all the West India islands.

Thomas Willson, esquire, naval commander at Goree.

John Hills, esquire, captain of H. M. ship *Zephyr*, on the African station.

Sir George Yonge, two voyages as lieutenant, and two as captain of a ship of war, on the African station.

Charles Berns Wadstrom, esquire, traveller on discovery in Africa, for the king of Sweden.

Reverend John Newton, five voyages to Africa in a slave-vessel, and resident eighteen months there.

Captain John Ashley Hall, in the merchant service, two voyages in a slave-vessel as a mate.

Alexander Falconbridge, four voyages in a slave-vessel as surgeon and surgeon's mate.

Captain John Samuel Smith, of the royal navy, on the West India station.

### LIST III.

Anthony Pantaleo How, esquire, employed by government as a botanist in Africa.

Sir Thomas Bolton Thompson, two voyages as lieutenant, and two as commander of a ship of war on the African station.

Lieutenant John Simpson, of the marines, two voyages in a ship of war on the African station.

Lieutenant Richard Storey, of the royal navy, four years in the slave-employ all over the coast.

Mr. George Miller, gunner of H. M. ship Pegase, one voyage in a slave-ship.

Mr. James Morley, gunner of H. M. ship Medway, six voyages in a slave-ship.

Mr. Henry Ellison, gunner of H. M. ship Resistance, eleven years in the slave-trade.

Mr. James Towne, carpenter of H. M. ship Syren, two voyages in a slave-ship.

Mr. John Douglas, boatswain of H. M. ship Russel, one voyage in a slave-ship.

Mr. Isaac Parker, shipkeeper of H. M. ship Melampus, two voyages in a slave-ship.

Thomas Trotter, esquire, M. D., one voyage as surgeon, of a slave-ship.

Mr. Isaac Wilson, one voyage as surgeon of a slave-ship.

Mr. Ecroyde Claxton, one voyage as surgeon of a slave-ship.

James Kiernan, esquire, resident four years on the banks of the Senegal.

Mr. John Bowman, eleven years in the slave-employ as mate, and as a factor in the interior of Africa.

Mr. William Dove, one voyage for slaves, and afterwards resident in America.

Major-general Tottenham, two years resident in the West Indies.

Captain Giles, 19th regiment, seven years quartered in the West Indies.

Captain Cook, 89th regiment, two years quartered in the West Indies.

Lieutenant Baker Davison, 79th regiment, twelve years quartered in the West Indies.

Captain Hall, of the royal navy, five years on the West India station.

Captain Thomas Lloyd, of the royal navy, one year on the West India station.

Captain Alexander Scott, of the royal navy, one voyage to Africa and the West Indies.

Mr. Ninian Jeffreys, a master in the royal navy, five years mate of a West Indiaman, and for two years afterwards in the islands in a ship of war.

Reverend Thomas Gwynn Rees, chaplain of H. M. ship Princess Amelia, in the West Indies.

Reverend Robert Boucher Nicholls, dean of Middleham, many years resident in the West Indies.

Hercules Ross, esquire, twenty-one years a merchant in the West Indies.

Mr. Thomas Clappeson, fifteen years in the West Indies as a wharfinger and pilot.

Mr. Mark Cook, sixteen years in the West Indies, first in the planting business, and then as clerk and schoolmaster.

Mr. Henry Coor, a millwright for fifteen years in the West Indies.

Reverend Mr. Davies, resident fourteen years in the West Indies.

Mr. William Duncan, four years in the West Indies, first as a clerk, and then as an overseer.

Mr. William Fitzmaurice, fifteen years, first as a book-keeper, and then as an overseer, in the West Indies.

Mr. Robert Forster, six years, first in a store, then as second master and pilot of a ship of war in the West Indies.

Mr. Robert Ross, twenty-four years, first as a book-keeper, then as an overseer, and afterwards as a planter, in the West Indies.

Mr. John Terry, fourteen years an overseer or manager in the West Indies.

Mr. Matthew Terry, twelve years resident, first as a book-keeper and overseer, then as a land-surveyor in the king's service, and afterwards as a colony-surveyor, in the West Indies.

George Woodward, esquire, an owner and mortgagee of property, and occasionally a resident in the West Indies.

Mr. Joseph Woodward, three years resident in the West Indies.

Henry Botham, esquire, a director of sugar-works, both in the East and West Indies.

Mr. John Giles, resident twelve years in the West Indies and America.

J. Harrison, esquire, M. D., twenty-three years resident, in the medical line, in the West Indies and America.

Robert Jackson, esquire, M. D., four years resident in the West Indies in the medical line; after which he joined his regiment, in the same profession, in America.

Thomas Woolrich, esquire, twenty years a merchant in the West Indies, but in the interim was twice in America.

Reverend James Stuart, two years in the West Indies, and twenty in America.

George Baille, esquire, one year in the West Indies and twenty-five in America.

William Beverley, esquire, eighteen years in America.

John Clapham, esquire, twenty years in America.

Robert Crew, esquire, a native of America, and long resident there.

John Savage, esquire, forty-six years resident in America.

The evidence having been delivered on both sides, and then printed, it was judged expedient by Mr. Wilberforce, seeing that it filled three folio volumes, to abridge it. This abridgment was made by the different friends of the cause. William Burgh, esquire, of York; Thomas Babington, esquire, of Rothley Temple; the reverend Thomas Gisborne, of Yoxall Lodge; Mr. Campbell Haliburton of Edinburgh; George Harri-

son, with one or two others of the committee, and myself, were employed upon it. The greater share; however, of the labor, fell upon Dr. Dickson. That no misrepresentation of any person's testimony might be made, Matthew Montagu, esquire, and the honorable E. J. Elliot, members of parliament, undertook to compare the abridged manuscripts with the original text, and to strike out or correct whatever they thought to be erroneous, and to insert whatever they thought to have been omitted. The committee for the abolition, when the work was finished, printed it at their own expense. Mr. Wilberforce then presented it to the house of commons, as a faithful abridgment of the whole evidence. Having been received as such under the guarantee of Mr. Montagu and Mr. Elliot, the committee sent it to every individual member of that house.

The book having been thus presented, and a day fixed for the final determination of the question, our feelings became almost insupportable: for we had the mortification to find, that our cause was going down in estimation, where it was then most important that it should have increased in favor. Our opponents had taken advantage of the long delay, which the examination of evidence had occasioned, to prejudice the minds of many of the members of the house of commons against us. The old arguments of emancipation, massacre, ruin, and indemnification, had been kept up; but, as the day of final decision approached, they had been increased. Such was

our situation at this moment ; when the current was turned still more powerfully against us by the peculiar circumstances of the times. It was indeed the misfortune of this great cause to be assailed by every weapon which could be turned against it. At this time Thomas Paine had published his *Rights of Man*. This had been widely circulated. At this time also the French revolution had existed nearly two years. The people of England had seen, during this interval, a government as it were dissected. They had seen an old constitution taken down, and a new one put up, piece by piece, in its stead. The revolution, therefore, in conjunction with the book in question, had had the effect of producing dissatisfaction among thousands ; and this dissatisfaction was growing, so as to alarm a great number of persons of property in the kingdom, as well as the government itself. Now will it be believed that our opponents had the injustice to lay hold of these circumstances, at this critical moment, to give a death-blow to the cause of the abolition ? They represented the committee, though it had existed before the French revolution or the *Rights of Man* were heard of, as a nest of Jacobins ; and they held up the cause, sacred as it was, and though it had the support of the minister, as affording an opportunity of meeting for the purpose of overthrowing the state. Their cry succeeded. The very book of the abridgment of the evidence was considered by many members as poisonous as that of the *Rights of Man*. It was too profane



for many of them to touch ; and they who discarded it, discarded the cause also.

But these were not the only circumstances which were used as means, at this critical moment, to defeat us. News of the revolution, which had commenced in St. Domingo in consequence of the disputes between the whites and the people of color, had, long before this, arrived in England. The horrible scenes which accompanied it, had been frequently published as so many arguments against our cause. In January new insurrections were announced as having happened in Martinique. The negroes there were described as armed, and the planters as having abandoned their estates for fear of massacre. Early in the month of March, insurrections in the smaller French islands were reported. Every effort was then made to represent these as the effects of the new principles of liberty, and of the cry for abolition. But what should happen, just at this moment, to increase the clamor against us? Nothing less than an insurrection in Dominica. Yes! An insurrection in a British island. This was the very event for our opponents. "All the predictions of the planters had now become verified. The horrible massacres were now realizing at home." To give this news still greater effect, a meeting of our opponents was held at the London tavern. By a letter read there it appeared, that "the ruin of Dominica was now at hand." Resolutions were voted, and a memorial presented to government, "immediately to des-

patch such a military force to the different islands, as might preserve the whites from destruction, and keep the negroes in subjection during the present critical state of the slave-bill." This alarm was kept up till the seventh of April, when another meeting took place to receive the answer of government to the memorial. It was there resolved, that "as it was too late to send troops to the islands, the best way of preserving them would be to bring the question of the Slave-trade to an immediate issue; and that it was the duty of the government, if they regarded the safety of the islands, to oppose the abolition of it. Accounts of all these proceedings were inserted in the public papers. It is needless to say that they were injurious to our cause. Many looked upon the abolitionists as monsters. They became also terrified themselves. The idea with these was, that unless the discussion on this subject was terminated, all would be lost. Thus, under a combination of effects arising from the publication of the Rights of Man, the rise and progress of the French revolution, and the insurrections of the negroes in the different islands, no one of which events had any thing to do with the abolition of the Slave-trade, the current was turned against us; and in this unfavorable frame of mind many members of parliament went into the house, on the day fixed for the discussion, to discharge their duty with respect to this great question.

On the eighteenth of April Mr. Wilberforce made his motion. He began by expressing a

hope that the present debate, instead of exciting asperity and confirming prejudice, would tend to produce a general conviction of the truth of what in fact was incontrovertible; that the abolition of the Slave-trade was indispensably required of them, not only by morality and religion, but by sound policy. He stated that he should argue the matter from evidence. He adverted to the character, situation, and means of information of his own witnesses; and having divided his subject into parts, the first of which related to the manner of reducing the natives of Africa to a state of slavery, he handled it in the following manner.

He would begin, he said, with the first boundary of the trade. Captain Wilson and Captain Hills, of his majesty's navy, and Mr. Dalrymple of the land service, had concurred in stating, that in the country contiguous to the river Senegal, when slave-ships arrived there, armed parties were regularly sent out in the evening, who scoured the country, and brought in their prey. The wretched victims were to be seen in the morning bound back to back in the huts on shore, whence they were conveyed, tied hand and foot, to the slave-ships. The design of these ravages was obvious, because, when the Slave-trade was stopped, they ceased. Mr. Kiernan spoke of the constant depredations by the Moors to procure slaves. Mr. Wadstrom confirmed them. The latter gentleman showed also that they were excited by presents of brandy, gunpowder, and such

other incentives; and that they were not only carried on by one community against another, but that the kings were stimulated to practise them, in their own territories, and on their own subjects: and in one instance a chieftain, who, when intoxicated, could not resist the demands of the slave-merchants, had expressed, in a moment of reason, a due sense of his own crime, and had reproached his Christian seducers. Abundant also were the instances of private rapine. Individuals were kidnapped, whilst in their fields and gardens. There was a universal feeling of distrust and apprehension there. The natives never went any distance from home without arms; and when Captain Wilson asked them the reason of it, they pointed to a slave-ship then lying within sight.

On the windward coast, it appeared from Lieutenant Story and Mr. Bowman, that the evils just mentioned existed, if possible, in a still higher degree. They had seen the remains of villages, which had been burnt, whilst the fields of corn were still standing beside them, and every other trace of recent desolation. Here an agent was sent to establish a settlement in the country, and to send to the ships such slaves as he might obtain. The orders he received from his captain were, that "he was to encourage the chieftains by brandy and gunpowder to go to war, to make slaves." This he did. The chieftains performed their part in return. The neighboring villages were surrounded and set on fire in the night. The inhabitants were seized when making their escape;

and, being brought to the agent, were by him forwarded to his principal on the coast. Mr. How, a botanist in the service of government, stated, that on the arrival of an order for slaves from Cape Coast Castle, while he was there, a native chief immediately sent forth armed parties, who brought in a supply of all descriptions in the night.

But he would now mention one or two instances of another sort, and these merely on account of the conclusion which was to be drawn from them. When Captain Hills was in the river Gambia, he mentioned accidentally to a black pilot, who was in the boat with him, that he wanted a cabin-boy. It so happened that some youths were then on the shore with vegetables to sell. The pilot beckoned to them to come on board; at the same time giving Captain Hills to understand that he might take his choice of them; and when Captain Hills rejected the proposal with indignation, the pilot seemed perfectly at a loss to account for his warmth; and dryly observed, that the slave-captains would not have been so scrupulous. Again, when General Rooke commanded at Goree, a number of the natives, men, women, and children, came to pay him a friendly visit. All was gayety and merriment. It was a scene to gladden the saddest, and to soften the hardest heart. But a slave-captain was not so soon thrown off his guard. Three English barbarians of this description had the audacity jointly to request the general to seize the whole unsuspecting

multitude and sell them. For this they alleged the precedent of a former governor. Was not this request a proof of the frequency of such acts of rapine? for how familiar must such have been to slave-captains, when three of them dared to carry to a British officer of rank such a flagitious proposal! This would stand in the place of a thousand instances. It would give credibility to every other act of violence stated in the evidence, however enormous it might appear.

But he would now have recourse for a moment to circumstantial evidence. An adverse witness, who had lived on the Gold Coast, had said that the only way in which children could be enslaved, was, by whole families being sold when the principals had been condemned for witchcraft. But he said at the same time, that few were convicted of this crime, and that the younger part of a family in these cases was sometimes spared. But if this account were true, it would follow that the children in the slave-vessels would be few indeed. But it had been proved, that the usual proportion of these was never less than a fourth of the whole cargo on that coast, and also that the kidnapping of children was very prevalent there.

All these atrocities, he said, were fully substantiated by the evidence; and here he should do injustice to his cause, if he were not to make a quotation from the speech of Mr. B. Edwards, in the assembly of Jamaica, who, though he was hostile to his propositions, had yet the candor to deliver himself in the following manner there:

“I am persuaded,” says he, “that Mr. Wilberforce has been rightly informed as to the manner in which slaves are generally procured. The intelligence I have collected from my own negroes abundantly confirms his account; and I have not the smallest doubt, that in Africa the effects of this trade are precisely such as he has represented them. The whole, or the greatest part, of that immense continent is a field of warfare and desolation; a wilderness, in which the inhabitants are wolves towards each other. That this scene of oppression, fraud, treachery, and bloodshed, if not originally occasioned, is in part (I will not say wholly) upheld by the Slave-trade, I dare not dispute. Every man in the Sugar Islands may be convinced that it is so, who will inquire of any African negroes, on their first arrival, concerning the circumstances of their captivity. The assertion that it is otherwise, is mockery and insult.”

But it was not only by acts of outrage that the Africans were brought into bondage. The very administration of justice was turned into an engine for that end. The smallest offence was punished by a fine equal to the value of a slave. Crimes were also fabricated; false accusations were resorted to; and persons were sometimes employed to seduce the unwary into practices, with a view to the conviction and the sale of them.

It was another effect of this trade, that it corrupted the morals of those who carried it on. Every fraud was used to deceive the ignorance

of the natives, by false weights and measures, adulterated commodities, and other impositions of a like sort. These frauds were even acknowledged by many, who had themselves practised them in obedience to the orders of their superiors. For the honor of the mercantile character of the country, such a traffic ought immediately to be suppressed.

Yet these things, however clearly proved by positive testimony, by the concession of opponents, by particular inference, by general reasoning, by the most authentic histories of Africa, by the experience of all countries and of all ages, these things, and (what was still more extraordinary) even the possibility of them, were denied by those who had been brought forward on the other side of the question. These, however, were chiefly persons, who had been trading governors of forts in Africa; or who had long commanded ships in the Slave-trade. As soon as he knew the sort of witnesses which was to be called against him, he had been prepared to expect much prejudice. But his expectations had been greatly surpassed by the testimony they had given. He did not mean to impeach their private characters, but they certainly showed themselves under the influence of such gross prejudices, as to render them incompetent judges of the subject they came to elucidate. They seemed (if he might so say) to be enveloped by a certain atmosphere of their own; and to see, as it were, through a kind of African medium. Every object, which met their eyes,



came distorted and turned from its true direction. Even the declarations, which they made on other occasions, seemed wholly strange to them. They sometimes not only forgot what they had seen, but what they had said ; and when to one of them his own testimony to the privy council was read, he mistook it for that of another, whose evidence he declared to be "the merest burlesque in the world."

But the house must be aware that there was not only an African medium, but an African logic. It seemed to be an acknowledged axiom in this, that every person, who offered a slave for sale, had a right to sell him, however fraudulently he might have obtained him. This had been proved by the witnesses who opposed him. "It would have stopped my trade," said one of them, "to have asked the broker how he came by the person he was offering me for sale." "We always suppose," said another, "the broker has a right to sell the person he offers us." "I never heard of such a question being asked," said a third ; "a man would be thought a fool, who should put such a question." He hoped the house would see the practical utility of this logic. It was the keystone, which held the building together. By means of it, slave-captains might traverse the whole coast of Africa, and see nothing but equitable practices. They could not, however, be wholly absolved, even if they availed themselves of this principle to its fullest extent ; for they had often committed depredations themselves ; espe-

cially when they were passing by any part of the coast, where they did not mean to continue or to go again. Hence it was (as several captains of the navy and others had declared on their examination) that the natives, when at sea in their canoes, would never come near the men of war, till they knew them to be such. But finding this, and that they were not slave-vessels, they laid aside their fears, and came and continued on board with unsuspecting cheerfulness.

With respect to the miseries of the Middle Passage, he had said so much on a former occasion, that he would spare the feelings of the committee as much as he could. He would therefore simply state, that the evidence which was before them confirmed all those scenes of wretchedness, which he had then described; the same suffering from a state of suffocation, by being crowded together; the same dancing in fetters; the same melancholy singing; the same eating by compulsion; the same despair; the same insanity; and all the other abominations which characterized the trade. New instances, however, had occurred, where these wretched men had resolved on death to terminate their woes. Some had destroyed themselves by refusing sustenance, in spite of threats and punishments. Others had thrown themselves into the sea; and more than one, when in the act of drowning, were seen to wave their hands in triumph, "exulting" (to use the words of an eye-witness) "that they had escaped." Yet these and similar things, when

viewed through the African medium he had mentioned, took a different shape and color. Captain Knox, an adverse witness, had maintained, that slaves lay, during the night, in tolerable comfort. And yet he confessed that in a vessel of one hundred and twenty tons, in which he had carried two hundred and ninety slaves, the latter had not all of them room to lie on their backs. How comfortably, then, must they have lain in his subsequent voyages! for he carried afterwards in a vessel of a hundred and eight tons, four hundred and fifty, and in a vessel of one hundred and fifty tons, no less than six hundred slaves. Another instance of African deception was to be found in the testimony of Captain Frazer, one of the most humane captains in the trade. It had been said of him that he had held hot coals to the mouth of a slave, to compel him to eat. He was questioned on this point; but not admitting, in the true spirit of African logic, that he who makes another commit a crime is guilty of it himself, he denied the charge indignantly, and defied a proof. But it was said to him, "Did you never order such a thing to be done?" His reply was, "Being sick in my cabin, I was informed that a man-slave would neither eat, drink, nor speak. I desired the mate and surgeon to try to persuade him to speak. I desired that the slaves might try also. When I found he was still obstinate, not knowing whether it was from sulkiness or insanity, I ordered a person to present him with a piece of fire in one hand, and a piece of yam in

the other, and to tell me what effect this had upon him. I learnt that he took the yam and began to eat it, but he threw the fire overboard." Such was his own account of the matter. This was eating by duress, if any thing could be called so. The captain, however, triumphed in his expedient, and concluded by telling the committee, that he sold this very slave at Grenada for forty pounds. Mark here the moral of the tale, and learn the nature and the cure of sulkiness.

But upon whom did the cruelties, thus arising out of the prosecution of this barbarous traffic, fall? Upon a people with feeling and intellect like ourselves. One witness had spoken of the acuteness of their understanding; another of the extent of their memories; a third of their genius for commerce; a fourth of their proficiency in manufactures at home. Many had admired their gentle and peaceable disposition; their cheerfulness; and their hospitality. Even they, who were nominally slaves in Africa, lived a happy life. A witness against the abolition had described them as sitting and eating with their masters in the true style of patriarchal simplicity and comfort. Were these, then, a people incapable of civilization? The argument that they were an inferior species had been proved to be false.

He would now go to a new part of the subject. An opinion had gone forth that the abolition of the trade would be the ruin of the West India islands. He trusted he should prove that the di-

rect contrary was the truth ; though, had he been unable to do this, it would have made no difference as to his own vote. In examining, however, this opinion, he should exclude the subject of the cultivation of new lands by fresh importations of slaves. The impolicy of this measure, apart from its inhumanity, was indisputably clear. Let the committee consider the dreadful mortality which attended it. Let them look to the evidence of Mr. Woolrich, and there see a contrast drawn between the slow, but sure progress of cultivation, carried on in the natural way, and the attempt to force improvements, which, however flattering the prospect at first, soon produced a load of debt, and inextricable embarrassments. He might even appeal to the statements of the West Indians themselves, who allowed that more than twenty millions were owing to the people of this country, to show that no system could involve them so deeply as that, on which they had hitherto gone. But he would refer them to the accounts of Mr. Irving, as contained in the evidence. Waiving, then, the consideration of this part of the subject, the opinion in question must have arisen from a notion, that the stock of slaves, now in the islands, could not be kept up by propagation ; but that it was necessary, from time to time, to recruit them with imported Africans. In direct refutation of this position, he should prove, first, That in the condition and treatment of the negroes, there were causes sufficient to afford us reason to expect a considerable decrease, but particularly

that their increase had not been a serious object of attention : secondly, That this decrease was in fact, notwithstanding, very trifling ; or rather, he believed, he might declare it had now actually ceased ; and, thirdly, He should urge many direct and collateral facts and arguments, constituting on the whole an irresistible proof, that even a rapid increase might henceforth be expected.

He wished to treat the West Indians with all possible candor ; but he was obliged to confess, in arguing upon these points, that whatever splendid instances there might be of kindness towards their slaves, there were some evils of almost universal operation, which were necessarily connected with the system of slavery. Above all, the state of degradation, to which they were reduced, deserved to be noticed ; as it produced an utter inattention to them as moral agents. They were kept at work under the whip, like cattle. They were left totally ignorant of morality and religion. There was no regular marriage among them. Hence promiscuous intercourse, early prostitution, and excessive drinking, were material causes of their decrease. With respect to the instruction of the slaves in the principles of religion, the happiest effects had resulted, particularly in Antigua, where, under the Moravians and Methodists, they had so far profited, that the planters themselves confessed their value, as property had been raised one-third by their increased habits of regularity and industry.

Whatever might have been said to the con-

trary, it was plainly to be inferred from the evidence, that the slaves were not protected by law. Colonial statutes had indeed been passed, but they were a dead letter ; since, however ill they were treated, they were not considered as having a right to redress. An instance of astonishing cruelty, by a Jew, had been mentioned by Mr. Ross. It was but justice to say, that the man was held in detestation for it ; but yet no one had ever thought of calling him to a legal account. Mr. Ross conceived a master had a right to punish his slave in whatever manner he might think proper. The same was declared by numberless other witnesses. Some instances, indeed, had lately occurred of convictions. A master had wantonly cut the mouth of a child, of six months old, almost from ear to ear. But did not the verdict of the jury show, that the doctrine of calling masters to an account was entirely novel ; as it only pronounced him “ Guilty, subject to the opinion of the court, if immoderate correction of a slave by his master be a crime indictable ! ” The court determined in the affirmative ; and what was the punishment of this barbarous act ? A fine of forty shillings currency, equivalent to about twenty-five shillings sterling.

The slaves were but ill off in point of medical care. Sometimes four or five, and even eight or nine thousand of them, were under the care of one medical man ; which, dispersed on different and distant estates, was a greater number than he could possibly attend to.

It was also in evidence, that they were in general under-fed. They were supported partly by the produce of their own provision-ground, and partly by an allowance of flour and grain from their masters. In one of the islands, where provision-ground did not answer one year in three, the allowance to a working negro was but from five to nine pints of grain per week ; in Dominica, where it never failed, from six to seven quarts ; in Nevis and St. Christopher's, where there was no provision-ground, it was but eleven pints. Add to this, that it might be still less, as the circumstances of their masters might become embarrassed ; and in this case, both an abridgment of their food, and an increase of their labor, would follow.

But the great cause of the decrease of the slaves was in the non-residence of the planters. Sir George Yonge, and many others, had said, they had seen the slaves treated in a manner which their owners would have resented, if they had known it. Mr. Orde spoke in the strongest terms of the misconduct of managers. The fact was, that these in general sought to establish their characters by producing large crops at a small immediate expense ; too little, considering how far the slaves might suffer from ill-treatment and excessive labor. The pursuit of such a system was a criterion for judging of their characters, as both Mr. Long and Mr. Ottley had confessed.

But he must contend, in addition to this, that the object of keeping up the stock of slaves by breeding had never been seriously attended to. For



this he might appeal both to his own witnesses, and to those of his opponents; but he would only notice one fact. It was remarkable that, when owners and managers were asked about the produce of their estates, they were quite at home as to the answer; but when they were asked about the proportion of their male and female slaves, and their infants, they knew little about the matter. Even medical men were adepts in the art of planting; but when they were asked the latter questions, as connecting with breeding and rearing, they seemed quite amazed; and could give no information upon the subject of them.

Persons, however, of great respectability, had been called as witnesses, who had not seen the treatment of the negroes as he had now described it. He knew what was due to their characters; but yet he must enter a general protest against their testimony. "I have often," says Mr. Ross, "attended both governors and admirals upon tours in the island of Jamaica. But it was not likely that these should see much distress upon these occasions. The white people and drivers would take care not to harrow up the feelings of strangers of distinction by the exercise of the whip, or the infliction of punishments, at that particular time; and even if there were any disgusting objects, it was natural to suppose that they would then remove them." But in truth, these gentlemen had given proofs that they were under the influence of prejudice. Some of them had declared the abolition would ruin the West Indies. But this,

it was obvious, must depend upon the practicability of keeping up the stock without African supplies; and yet, when they were questioned upon this point, they knew nothing about it. Hence they had formed a conclusion without premises. Their evidence, too, extended through a long series of years. They had never seen one instance of ill-treatment in the time; and yet, in the same breath, they talked of the amended situation of the slaves, and that they were now far better off than formerly. One of them, to whom his country owed much, stated that a master had been sentenced to death for the murder of his own slave; but his recollection must have failed him; for the murder of a slave was not then a capital crime. A respectable governor also had delivered an opinion to the same effect; but had he looked into the statute-book of the island, he would have found his error.

It had been said that the slaves were in a better state than the peasantry of this country. But when the question was put to Mr. Ross, did he not answer, "that he would not insult the latter by a comparison?"

It had been said again, that the negroes were happier as slaves, than they would be if they were to be made free. But how was this reconcileable with facts? If a negro under extraordinary circumstances had saved money enough, did he not always purchase his release from this situation of superior happiness, by the sacrifice of his last shilling? Was it not also notorious, that the greatest

reward, which a master thought he could bestow upon his slave for long and faithful services, was his freedom?

It had been said again, that negroes, when made free, never returned to their own country. But was not the reason obvious? If they could even reach their own homes in safety, their kindred and connexions might be dead. But would they subject themselves to be kidnapped again; to be hurried once more on board a slave-ship; and again to endure and survive the horrors of the passage? Yet the love of their native country had been proved beyond a doubt. Many of the witnesses had heard them talk of it in terms of the strongest affection. Acts of suicide, too, were frequent in the islands, under the notion that these afforded them the readiest means of getting home. Conformably with this, Captain Wilson had maintained that the funerals, which in Africa were accompanied with lamentations and cries of sorrow, were attended, in the West Indies, with every mark of joy.

He had now, he said, made good his first proposition, That in the condition of the slaves there were causes, which should lead us to expect that there would be a considerable decrease among them. This decrease in the island of Jamaica was but trifling, or, rather, it had ceased some years ago; and if there was a decrease, it was only on the imported slaves. It appeared from the privy council report, that from 1698 to 1730 the decrease was three and a half per cent.; from

1730 to 1755 it was two and a half per cent. ; from 1755 to 1768 it was lessened to one and three-quarters ; and from 1768 to 1788 it was not more than one per cent. This last decrease was not greater than could be accounted for from hurricanes and consequent famines, and from the number of imported Africans who perished in the seasoning. The latter was a cause of mortality, which, it was evident, would cease with the importations. This conclusion was confirmed in part by Dr. Anderson, who, in his testimony to the assembly of Jamaica, affirmed, that there was a considerable increase on the properties of the island, and particularly in the parish in which he resided.

He would now proceed to establish his second proposition, That from henceforth a very considerable increase might be expected. This he might support by a close reasoning upon the preceding facts. But the testimony of his opponents furnished him with sufficient evidence. He could show, that wherever the slaves were treated better than ordinary, there was uniformly an increase in their number. Look at the estates of Mr. Willock, Mr. Ottley, Sir Ralph Payne, and others. In short, he should weary the committee, if he were to enumerate the instances of plantations, which were stated in the evidence to have kept up their numbers, only from a little variation in their treatment. A remedy also had been lately found for a disorder, by which vast numbers of infants had been formerly swept away. Mr. Long also had laid it down, that whenever the slaves

should bear a certain proportion to the produce, they might be expected to keep up their numbers; but this proportion they now exceeded. The assembly of Jamaica had given it also as their opinion, "that when once the sexes should become nearly equal in point of number, there was no reason to suppose that the increase of the negroes by generation would fall short of the natural increase of the laboring poor in Great Britain." But the inequality, here spoken of, could only exist in the case of the African negroes, of whom more males were imported than females; and this inequality would be done away soon after the trade should cease.

But the increase of the negroes, where their treatment was better than ordinary, was confirmed in the evidence by instances in various parts of the world. From one end of the continent of America to the other, their increase had been undeniably established; and this to a prodigious extent, though they had to contend with the severe cold of the winter, and in some parts with noxious exhalations in the summer. This was the case also in the settlement of Bencoolen in the East Indies. It appeared from the evidence of Mr. Botham, that a number of negroes, who had been imported there in the same disproportion of the sexes as in West India cargoes, and who lived under the same disadvantages, as in the islands, of promiscuous intercourse and general prostitution, began, after they had been settled a short time, annually to increase.

But to return to the West Indies. A slave-ship had been many years ago wrecked near St. Vincent's. The slaves on board, who escaped to the island, were without necessaries; and, besides, were obliged to maintain a war with the native Caribbs; yet they soon multiplied to an astonishing number; and, according to Mr. Ottley, they were now on the increase. From Sir John Dalrymple's evidence, it appeared that the domestic slaves in Jamaica, who were less worked than those in the field, increased; and from Mr. Long, that the free blacks and mulattoes there increased also.

But there was an instance which militated against these facts (and the only one in the evidence) which he would now examine. Sir Archibald Campbell had heard, that the maroons in Jamaica in the year 1739 amounted to three thousand men fit to carry arms. This supposed their whole number to have been about twelve thousand. But in the year 1782, after a real muster by himself, he found, to his great astonishment, that the fighting men did not then amount to three hundred. Now the fact was, that Sir Archibald Campbell's first position was founded upon rumor only; and was not true. For according to Mr. Long, the maroons were actually numbered in 1749; when they amounted to about six hundred and sixty in all, having only a hundred and fifty men fit to carry arms. Hence, if when mustered by Sir Archibald Campbell he found three hundred fighting men, they must

from 1749 to 1782 have actually doubled their population.

Was it possible, after these instances, to suppose that the negroes could not keep up their numbers, if their natural increase were made a subject of attention? The reverse was proved by sound reasoning. It had been confirmed by unquestionable facts. It had been shown, that they had increased in every situation, where there was the slightest circumstance in their favor. Where there had been any decrease, it was stated to be trifling; though no attention appeared to have been paid to the subject. This decrease had been gradually lessening; and, whenever a single cause of it had been removed, (many still remaining,) it had altogether ceased. Surely these circumstances formed a body of proof, which was irresistible.

He would now speak of the consequences of the abolition of the Slave-trade in other points of view; and first, as to its effects upon our marine. An abstract of the Bristol and Liverpool muster-rolls had been just laid before the house. It appeared from this, that in three hundred and fifty slave-vessels, having on board twelve thousand two hundred and sixty-three persons, two thousand six hundred and forty-three were lost in twelve months; whereas in four hundred and sixty-two West Indiamen, having on board seven thousand six hundred and forty persons, one hundred and eighteen only were lost in seven months. This rather exceeded the losses stated by Mr.

Clarkson. For their barbarous usage on board these ships, and for their sickly and abject state in the West Indies, he would appeal to Governor Parry's letter; to the evidence of Mr. Ross; to the assertion of Mr. B. Edwards, an opponent; and to the testimony of captains Sir George Yonge and Thompson, of the royal navy. He would appeal also to what Captain Hall, of the navy, had given in evidence. This gentleman, after the action of the twelfth of April, impressed thirty hands from a slave-vessel, whom he selected with the utmost care from a crew of seventy; and he was reprimanded by his admiral, though they could scarcely get men to bring home the prizes, for introducing such wretches to communicate disorders to the fleet. Captain Smith of the navy had also declared, that when employed to board Guineamen to impress sailors, although he had examined near twenty vessels, he never was able to get more than two men, who were fit for service; and these turned out such inhuman fellows, although good seamen, that he was obliged to dismiss them from the ship.

But he hoped the committee would attend to the latter part of the assertion of Captain Smith. Yes: this trade, while it injured the constitutions of our sailors, debased their morals. Of this, indeed, there was a barbarous illustration in the evidence. A slave-ship had struck on some shoals, called the Morant Keys, a few leagues from the east end of Jamaica. The crew landed in their boats, with arms and provisions, leaving



the slaves on board in their irons. This happened in the night. When morning came, it was discovered that the negroes had broken their shackles, and were busy in making rafts; upon which afterwards they placed the women and children. The men attended upon the latter, swimming by their side, whilst they drifted to the island where the crew were. But what was the sequel? From an apprehension that the negroes would consume the water and provision which had been landed, the crew resolved to destroy them as they approached the shore. They killed between three and four hundred. Out of the whole cargo, only thirty-three were saved, who, on being brought to Kingston, were sold. It would, however, be to no purpose, he said, to relieve the Slave-trade from this act of barbarity. The story of the Morant Keys was paralleled by that of Captain Collingwood; and were you to get rid of these, another, and another, would still present itself, to prove the barbarous effects of this trade on the moral character.

But of the miseries of the trade there was no end. Whilst he had been reading out of the evidence the story of the Morant Keys, his eye had but glanced on the opposite page, and it met another circumstance of horror. This related to what were called the refuse-slaves. Many people in Kingston were accustomed to speculate in the purchase of those, who were left after the first day's sale. They then carried them out into the country, and retailed them. Mr. Ross declared,

that he had seen these landed in a very wretched state; sometimes in the agonies of death, and sold as low as for a dollar, and that he had known several expire in the piazzas of the vendue-master. The bare description superseded the necessity of any remark. Yet these were the familiar incidents of the Slave-trade.

But he would go back to the seamen. He would mention another cause of mortality, by which many of them lost their lives. In looking over Lloyd's List, no less than six vessels were cut off by the irritated natives in one year, and the crews massacred. Such instances were not unfrequent. In short, the history of this commerce was written throughout in characters of blood.

He would next consider the effects of the abolition on those places where it was chiefly carried on. But would the committee believe, after all the noise which had been made on this subject, that the Slave-trade composed but a thirtieth part of the export trade of Liverpool, and that of the trade of Bristol it constituted a still less proportion? For the effects of the abolition on the general commerce of the kingdom, he would refer them to Mr. Irving; from whose evidence it would appear, that the medium value of the British manufactures, exported to Africa, amounted only to between four and five hundred thousand pounds annually. This was but a trifling sum. Surely the superior capital, ingenuity, application, and integrity of the British manufacturer would command new markets for the produce of his indus-

try, to an equal amount, when this should be no more. One branch, however, of our manufactures, he confessed, would suffer from the abolition; and that was the manufacture of gunpowder; of which, the nature of our connexion with Africa drew from us as much as we exported to all the rest of the world besides.

He hastened, however, to another part of the argument. Some had said, "We wish to put an end to the Slave-trade, but we do not approve of your mode. Allow more time. Do not displease the legislatures of the West India Islands. It is by them that those laws must be passed, and enforced, which will secure your object." Now he was directly at issue with these gentlemen. He could show, that the abolition was the only certain mode of amending the treatment of the slaves, so as to secure their increase; and that the mode which had been offered to him, was at once inefficacious and unsafe. In the first place, how could any laws, made by these legislatures, be effectual, whilst the evidence of negroes was in no case admitted against white men? What was the answer from Grenada? Did it not state, "that they who were capable of cruelty, would in general be artful enough to prevent any but slaves from being witnesses of the fact?" Hence it had arisen, that when positive laws had been made, in some of the islands, for the protection of the slaves, they had been found almost a dead letter. Besides, by what law would you enter into every man's domestic concerns, and regulate

the interior economy of his house and plantation? This would be something more than a general excise. Who would endure such a law? And yet, on all these and innumerable other minutiae must depend the protection of the slaves, their comforts, and the probability of their increase. It was universally allowed, that the Code Noir had been utterly neglected in the French islands, though there was an officer appointed by the crown to see it enforced. The provisions of the Directorio had been but of little more avail in the Portuguese settlements, or the institution of a Protector of the Indians in those of the Spaniards. But what degree of protection the slaves would enjoy, might be inferred from the admission of a gentleman, by whom this very plan of regulation had been recommended, and who was himself no ordinary person, but a man of discernment and legal resources. He had proposed a limitation of the number of lashes to be given by the master or overseer for one offence. But, after all, he candidly confessed, that his proposal was not likely to be useful, while the evidence of slaves continued inadmissible against their masters. But he could even bring testimony to the inefficacy of such regulations. A wretch in Barbadoes had chained a negro girl to the floor, and flogged her till she was nearly expiring. Captain Cook and Major Fitch, hearing her cries, broke open the door and found her. The wretch retreated from their resentment, but cried out exultingly, "that he had only given her thirty-nine

lashes (the number limited by law) at any one time ; and that he had only inflicted this number three times since the beginning of the night," adding, "that he would prosecute them for breaking open his door ; and that he would flog her to death for all any one, if he pleased ; and that he would give her the fourth thirty-nine before morning."

But this plan of regulation was not only inefficient, but unsafe. He entered his protest against the fatal consequences, which might result from it. The negroes were creatures like ourselves ; but they were uninformed, and their moral character was debased. Hence they were unfit for civil rights. To use these properly, they must be gradually restored to that level, from which they had been so unjustly degraded. To allow them an appeal to the laws, would be to awaken in them a sense of the dignity of their nature. The first return of life, after a swoon, was commonly a convulsion, dangerous at once to the party himself and to all around him. You should first prepare them for the situation, and not bring the situation to them. To be under the protection of the law, was in fact to be a freeman ; and to unite slavery and freedom in one condition was impracticable. The abolition, on the other hand, was exactly such an agent as the case required. All hopes of supplies from the coast being cut off, breeding would henceforth become a serious object of attention ; and the care of this, as including better clothing and

feeding, and milder discipline, would extend to innumerable particulars, which an act of assembly could neither specify nor enforce. The horrible system, too, which many had gone upon, of working out their slaves in a few years, and recruiting their gangs with imported Africans, would receive its death-blow from the abolition of the trade. The opposite would force itself on the most unfeeling heart. Ruin would stare a man in the face, if he were not to conform to it. The non-resident owners would then express themselves in the terms of Sir Philip Gibbs, "that he should consider it as the fault of his manager, if he were not to keep up the number of his slaves." This reasoning concerning the different tendencies of the two systems was self-evident. But facts were not wanting to confirm it. Mr. Long had remarked, that all the insurrections and suicides in Jamaica had been found among the imported slaves, who, not having lost the consciousness of civil rights, which they had enjoyed in their own country, could not brook the indignities to which they were subjected in the West Indies. An instance in point was afforded also by what had lately taken place in the island of Dominica. The disturbance there had been chiefly occasioned by some runaway slaves from the French islands. But what an illustration was it of his own doctrine to say, that the slaves of several persons, who had been treated with kindness, were not among the number of the insurgents on that occasion!

But when persons coolly talked of putting an

end to the Slave-trade, through the medium of the West India legislatures, and of gradual abolition, by means of regulations, they surely forgot the miseries which this horrid traffic occasioned in Africa during every moment of its continuance. This consideration was conclusive with him, when called upon to decide whether the Slave-trade should be tolerated for a while, or immediately abolished. The divine law against murder was absolute and unqualified. Whilst we were ignorant of all these things, our sanction of them might, in some measure, be pardoned. But now, when our eyes were opened, could we tolerate them for a moment, unless we were ready at once to determine that gain should be our god, and, like the heathens of old, were prepared to offer up human victims at the shrine of our idolatry?

This consideration precluded also the giving heed for an instant to another plea, namely, that if we were to abolish the trade, it would be proportionably taken up by other nations. But, whatever other nations did, it became Great Britain, in every point of view, to take a forward part. One-half of this guilty commerce had been carried on by her subjects. As we had been great in our crime, we should be early in our repentance. If Providence had showered his blessings upon us in unparalleled abundance, we should show ourselves grateful for them, by rendering them subservient to the purposes for which they were intended. There would be a day of retribution, wherein we should have to give an account

of all those talents, faculties, and opportunities, with which we had been intrusted. Let it not, then, appear that our superior power had been employed to oppress our fellow-creatures, and our superior light to darken the creation of God. He could not but look forward with delight to the happy prospects which opened themselves to his view in Africa from the abolition of the Slave-trade; when a commerce, justly deserving that name, should be established with her; not like that, falsely so called, which now subsisted, and which all who were interested for the honor of the commercial character (though there were no superior principle) should hasten to disavow. Had this trade, indeed, been ever so profitable, his decision would have been in no degree affected by that consideration. "Here's the smell of blood on the hand still, and all the perfumes of Arabia cannot sweeten it."

He doubted whether it was not almost an act of degrading condescension to stoop to discuss the question in the view of commercial interest. On this ground, however, he was no less strong than on every other. Africa abounded with productions of value, which she would gladly exchange for our manufactures, when these were not otherwise to be obtained; and to what an extent her demand might then grow, exceeded almost the powers of computation. One instance already existed of a native king, who, being debarred by his religion the use of spirituous liquors, and therefore not feeling the irresistible temptation to acts



of rapine which they afforded to his countrymen, had abolished the Slave-trade throughout all his dominions, and was encouraging an honest industry.

For his own part, he declared that, interested as he might be supposed to be in the final event of the question, he was comparatively indifferent as to the present decision of the house upon it. Whatever they might do, the people of Great Britain, he was confident, would abolish the Slave-trade, when, as would then soon happen, its injustice and cruelty should be fairly laid before them. It was a nest of serpents, which would never have existed so long, but for the darkness in which they lay hid. The light of day would now be let in on them, and they would vanish from the sight. For himself, he declared he was engaged in a work, which he would never abandon. The consciousness of the justice of his cause would carry him forward, though he were alone; but he could not but derive encouragement from considering with whom he was associated. Let us not, he said, despair. It is a blessed cause; and success, ere long, will crown our exertions. Already we have gained one victory. We have obtained for these poor creatures the recognition of their human nature,\* which, for a while, was most shamefully denied them. This is the first-fruits of our efforts. Let us persevere, and our triumph will be complete.

\* This point was actually obtained by the evidence before the house of commons; for, after this, we heard no more of them as an inferior race.

Never, never, will we desist, till we have wiped away this scandal from the Christian name; till we have released ourselves from the load of guilt under which we at present labor; and till we have extinguished every trace of this bloody traffic, which our posterity, looking back to the history of these enlightened times, will scarcely believe had been suffered to exist so long, a disgrace and a dishonor to our country.

He then moved, that the chairman be instructed to move for leave to bring in a bill to prevent the further importation of slaves into the British colonies in the West Indies.

Colonel Tarleton immediately rose up, and began by giving an historical account of the trade from the reign of Elizabeth to the present time. He then proceeded to the sanction, which parliament had always given it. Hence it could not then be withdrawn without a breach of faith. Hence, also, the private property embarked in it was sacred; nor could it be invaded, unless an adequate compensation were given in return.

They, who had attempted the abolition of the trade, were led away by a mistaken humanity. The Africans themselves had no objection to its continuance.

With respect to the Middle Passage, he believed the mortality there to be, on an average, only five in the hundred; whereas, in regiments sent out to the West Indies, the average loss in the year was about ten and a half per cent.

The Slave-trade was absolutely necessary, if we

meant to carry on our West India commerce ; for many attempts had been made to cultivate the lands in the different islands by white laborers ; but they had always failed.

It had also the merit of keeping up a number of seamen in readiness for the state. Lord Rodney had stated this as one of its advantages on the breaking out of a war. Liverpool alone could supply nine hundred and ninety-three seamen annually.

He would now advert to the connexions dependant upon the African trade. It was the duty of the house to protect the planters, whose lives had been, and were then, exposed to imminent dangers, and whose property had undergone an unmerited depreciation. To what could this depreciation, and to what could the late insurrection at Dominica be imputed, which had been saved from horrid carnage and midnight butchery only by the adventitious arrival of two British regiments ? They could only be attributed to the long delayed question of the abolition of the Slave-trade ; and if this question were to go much longer unsettled, Jamaica would be endangered also.

To members of landed property he would observe, that the abolition would lessen the commerce of the country, and increase the national debt and the number of their taxes. The minister, he hoped, who patronized this wild scheme, had some new pecuniary resource in store to supply the deficiencies it would occasion.

To the mercantile members he would speak

thus : “A few ministerial men in the house had been gifted with religious inspiration, and this had been communicated to other eminent personages in it; these enlightened philanthropists had discovered, that it was necessary, for the sake of humanity and for the honor of the nation, that the merchants concerned in the African trade should be persecuted, notwithstanding the sanction of their trade by parliament, and notwithstanding that such persecution must aggrandize the rivals of Great Britain.” Now how did this language sound? It might have done in the twelfth century, when all was bigotry and superstition. But let not a mistaken humanity, in these enlightened times, furnish a colorable pretext for any injurious attack on property or character.

These things being considered, he should certainly oppose the measure in contemplation. It would annihilate a trade, whose exports amounted to eight hundred thousand pounds annually, and which employed a hundred and sixty vessels and more than five thousand seamen. It would destroy also the West India trade, which was of the annual value of six millions; and which employed one hundred and sixty thousand tons of shipping, and seamen in proportion. These were objects of too much importance to the country to be hazarded on an unnecessary speculation.

Mr. Grosvenor then rose. He complimented the humanity of Mr. Wilberforce, though he differed from him on the subject of his motion. He himself had read only the privy council report;

and he wished for no other evidence. The question had then been delayed two years. Had the abolition been so clear a point as it was said to be, it could not have needed either so much evidence or time.

He had heard a good deal about kidnapping, and other barbarous practices. He was sorry for them. But these were the natural consequences of the laws of Africa; and it became us as wise men to turn them to our own advantage. The Slave-trade was certainly not an amiable trade. Neither was that of a butcher; but yet it was a very necessary one.

There was great reason to doubt the propriety of the present motion. He had twenty reasons for disapproving it. The first was, that the thing was impossible. He needed not, therefore, to give the rest. Parliament, indeed, might relinquish the trade. But to whom? To foreigners, who would continue it, and without the humane regulations which were applied to it by his countrymen.

He would give advice to the house on this subject in the words which the late alderman Beckford used on a different occasion: "Meddle not with troubled waters: they will be found to be bitter waters, and the waters of affliction." He again admitted, that the Slave-trade was not an amiable trade; but he would not gratify his humanity at the expense of the interests of his country; and he thought we should not too curiously inquire into the unpleasant circumstances which attended it.

Mr. James Martin succeeded Mr. Grosvenor. He said, he had been long aware how much self-interest could pervert the judgment; but he was not apprized of the full power of it, till the Slave-trade became a subject of discussion. He had always conceived, that the custom of trafficking in human beings had been incautiously begun, and without any reflection upon it; for he never could believe that any man, under the influence of moral principles, could suffer himself knowingly to carry on a trade replete with fraud, cruelty, and destruction; with destruction, indeed, of the worst kind, because it subjected the sufferers to a lingering death. But he found now, that even such a trade as this could be sanctioned.

It was well observed in the petition from the University of Cambridge against the Slave-trade, "that a firm belief in the providence of a benevolent Creator, assured them that no system, founded on the oppression of one part of mankind, could be beneficial to another." He felt much concern, that in an assembly of the representatives of a country, boasting itself zealous not only for the preservation of its own liberties, but for the general rights of mankind, it should be necessary to say a single word upon such a subject; but the deceitfulness of the human heart was such, as to change the appearances of truth, when it stood in opposition to self-interest. And he had to lament that even among those, whose public duty it was to cling to the universal and

eternal principles of truth, justice, and humanity; there were found some, who could defend that which was unjust, fraudulent, and cruel.

The doctrines he had heard that evening, ought to have been reserved for times the most flagrantly profligate and abandoned. He never expected then to learn, that the everlasting laws of righteousness were to give way to imaginary, political, and commercial expediency; and that thousands of our fellow-creatures were to be reduced to wretchedness, that individuals might enjoy opulence, or government a revenue.

He hoped that the house, for the sake of its own character, would explode these doctrines with all the marks of odium they deserved; and that all parties would join in giving a death-blow to this execrable trade. The royal family would, he expected, from their known benevolence, patronize the measure. Both houses of parliament were now engaged in the prosecution of a gentleman accused of cruelty and oppression in the east. But what were these cruelties, even if they could be brought home to him, when compared in number and degree to those, which were every day and every hour committed in the abominable traffic, which was now under their discussion? He considered, therefore, both houses of parliament as pledged upon this occasion. Of the support of the bishops he could have no doubt; because they were to render Christianity amiable, both by their doctrine and their example. Some of the inferior clergy had already manifested a

laudable zeal in behalf of the injured Africans. The University of Cambridge had presented a petition to that house worthy of itself. The sister-university had, by one of her representatives, given sanction to the measure. Dissenters of various denominations, but particularly the Quakers, (who, to their immortal honor, had taken the lead in it,) had vied with those of the established church in this amiable contest. The first counties, and some of the largest trading towns, in the kingdom had espoused the cause. In short, there had never been more unanimity in the country, than in this righteous attempt.

With such support, and with so good a cause, it would be impossible to fail. Let but every man stand forth, who had at any time boasted of himself as an Englishman, and success would follow. But if he were to be unhappily mistaken as to the result, we must give up the name of Englishmen. Indeed, if we retained it, we should be the greatest hypocrites in the world; for we boasted of nothing more than of our own liberty; we manifested the warmest indignation at the smallest personal insult; we professed liberal sentiments towards other nations: but to do these things, and to continue such a traffic, would be to deserve the hateful character before mentioned. While we could hardly bear the sight of any thing resembling slavery, even as a punishment, among ourselves, how could we consistently entail an eternal slavery upon others?

It had been frequently, but most disgracefully



said, that "we should not be too eager in setting the example. Let the French begin it." Such a sentiment was a direct libel upon the ancient, noble, and generous character of this nation. We ought, on the other hand, under the blessings we enjoyed, and under the high sense we entertained of our own dignity as a people, to be proudly fearful, lest other nations should anticipate our design, and obtain the palm before us. It became us to lead; and if others should not follow us, it would belong to them to glory in the shame of trampling under foot the laws of reason, humanity, and religion.

This motion, he said, came strongly recommended to them. The honorable member, who introduced it, was justly esteemed for his character. He was the representative, too, of a noble county, which had been always ready to take the lead in every public measure for the good of the community, or for the general benefit of mankind; of a county, too, which had had the honor of producing a Saville. Had his illustrious predecessor been alive, he would have shown the same zeal on the same occasion. The preservation of the unalienable rights of all his fellow-creatures was one of the chief characteristics of that excellent citizen. Let every member in that house imitate him in the purity of their conduct and in the universal rectitude of their measures, and they would pay the same tender regard to the rights of other countries as to those of their own; and, for his part, he should never believe

those persons to be sincere, who were loud in their professions of love of liberty, if he saw that love confined to the narrow circle of one community, which ought to be extended to the natural rights of every inhabitant of the globe.

But we should be better able to bring ourselves up to this standard of rectitude, if we were to put ourselves into the situation of those whom we oppressed. This was the rule of our religion. What should we think of those who should say, that it was their interest to injure us? But he hoped we should not deceive ourselves so grossly as to imagine that it was our real interest to oppress any one. The advantages to be obtained by tyranny were imaginary, and deceitful to the tyrant; and the evils they caused to the oppressed were grievous, and often insupportable.

Before he sat down, he would apologize, if he had expressed himself too warmly on this subject. He did not mean to offend any one. There were persons connected with the trade, some of whom he pitied on account of the difficulty of their situation. But he should think most contemptibly of himself as a man, if he could talk on this traffic without emotion. It would be a sign to him of his own moral degradation. He regretted his inability to do justice to such a cause; but if, in having attempted to forward it, he had shown the weakness of his powers, he must console himself with the consideration, that he felt more solid comfort in having acted up to sound public principles, than he could have done from the exertion

of the most splendid talents against the conviction of his conscience.

Mr. Burdon rose, and said he was embarrassed to know how to act. Mr. Wilberforce had in a great measure met his ideas. Indeed, he considered himself as much in his hands; but he wished to go gradually to the abolition of the trade. He wished to give time to the planters to recruit their stocks. He feared the immediate abolition might occasion a monopoly among such of them as were rich, to the detriment of the less affluent. We ought, like a judicious physician, to follow nature, and to promote a gradual recovery.

Mr. Francis rose next. After complimenting Mr. Wilberforce, he stated that personal considerations might appear to incline him to go against the side which he was about to take, namely, that of strenuously supporting his motion. Having himself an interest in the West Indies, he thought that what he should submit to the house would have the double effect of evidence and argument; and he stated most unequivocally his opinion, that the abolition of the Slave-trade would tend materially to the benefit of the West Indies.

The arguments urged by the honorable mover were supported by the facts, which he had adduced from the evidence, more strongly than any arguments had been supported in any speech he had ever heard. He wished, however, that more of these facts had been introduced into the debate; for they were apt to have a greater effect upon the

mind than mere reasonings, however just and powerful. Many had affirmed that the Slave-trade was politic and expedient; but it was worthy of remark, that no man had ventured to deny that it was criminal. Criminal, however, he declared it to be in the highest degree; and he believed it was equally impolitic. Both its inexpediency and injustice had been established by the honorable mover. He dwelt much on the unhappy situation of the negroes in the West Indies, who were without the protection of government or of efficient laws, and subject to the mere caprice of men, who were at once the parties, the judges, and the executioners.

He instanced an overseer, who, having thrown a negro into a copper of boiling cane-juice for a trifling offence, was punished merely by the loss of his place, and by being obliged to pay the value of the slave. He stated another instance of a girl of fourteen, who was dreadfully whipped for coming too late to her work. She fell down motionless after it; and was then dragged along the ground, by the legs, to an hospital, where she died. The murderer, though tried, was acquitted by a jury of his peers, upon the idea that it was impossible a master could destroy his own property. This was a notorious fact. It was published in the Jamaica Gazette; and it had even happened since the question of the abolition had been started.

The only argument used against such cruelties was the master's interest in the slave. But he

urged the common cruelty to horses, in which their drivers had an equal interest with the drivers of men in the colonies, as a proof that this was no security. He had never heard an instance of a master being punished for the murder of his slave. The propagation of the slaves was so far from being encouraged, that it was purposely checked, because it was thought more profitable and less troublesome to buy a full grown negro, than to rear a child. He repeated that his interest might have inclined him to the other side of the question; but he did not choose to compromise between his interest and his duty; for, if he abandoned his duty, he should not be happy in this world, nor should he deserve happiness in the next.

Mr. Pitt rose, but he said it was only to move, seeing that justice could not be done to the subject this evening, that the further consideration of the question might be adjourned to the next.

Mr. Cawthorne and Colonel Tarleton both opposed this motion, and Colonel Phipps and Lord Carhampton supported it.

Mr. Fox said, the opposition to the adjournment was uncandid and unbecoming. They who opposed it well knew that the trade could not bear discussion. Let it be discussed; and, although there were symptoms of predetermination in some, the abolition of it must be carried. He would not believe that there could be found in the house of commons men of such hard hearts and inaccessible understandings, as to vote an

assent to its continuance, and then go home to their families, satisfied with their vote, after they had been once made acquainted with the subject.

Mr. Pitt agreed with Mr. Fox, that from a full discussion of the subject there was every reason to augur that the abolition would be adopted. Under the imputations with which this trade was loaded, gentlemen should remember, they could not do justice to their own characters, unless they stood up and gave their reasons for opposing the abolition of it. It was unusual also to force any question of such importance to so hasty a decision. For his own part, it was his duty, from the situation in which he stood, to state fully his own sentiments on the question; and, however exhausted both he and the house might be, he was resolved it should not pass without discussion, as long as he had strength to utter a word upon it. Every principle, that could bind a man of honor and conscience, would impel him to give the most powerful support he could to the motion for the abolition.

The motion of Mr. Pitt was assented to, and the house was adjourned accordingly.

On the next day the subject was resumed. Sir William Yonge rose, and said, that, though he differed from the honorable mover, he had much admired his speech of the last evening. Indeed, the recollection of it made him only the more sensible of the weakness of his own powers; and yet, having what he supposed to be irrefragable

arguments in his possession, he felt emboldened to proceed.

And, first, before he could vote for the abolition, he wished to be convinced that, whilst Britain were to lose, Africa would gain. As for himself, he hated a traffic in men, and joyfully anticipated its termination at no distant period, under a wise system of regulation: but he considered the present measure as crude and indolent; and as precluding better and wiser measures, which were already in train. A British parliament should attain not only the best ends, but by the wisest means.

Great Britain might abandon her share of this trade, but she could not abolish it. Parliament was not an assembly of delegates from the powers of Europe, but of a single nation. It could not, therefore, suppress the trade, but would eventually aggravate those miseries incident to it, which every enlightened man must acknowledge, and every good man must deplore. He wished the traffic for ever closed. But other nations were only waiting for our decision, to seize the part we should leave them. The new projects of these would be intemperate; and, in the zeal of rivalry, the present evils of comparatively sober dealing would be aggravated beyond all estimate in this new and heated auction of bidders for life and limb. We might, indeed, by regulation, give an example of new principles of policy and of justice; but if we were to withdraw suddenly from this commerce, like Pontius Pilate, we

should wash our hands, indeed, but we should not be innocent as to the consequences.

On the first agitation of this business, Mr. Wilberforce had spoken confidently of other nations following our example. But had not the national assembly of France referred the Slave-trade to a select committee, and had not that committee rejected the measure of its abolition? By the evidence it appeared, that the French and Spaniards were then giving bounties to the Slave-trade; that Denmark was desirous of following it; that America was encouraging it; and that the Dutch had recognised its necessity, and recommended its recovery. Things were bad enough, indeed, as they were, but he was sure this rivalry would make them worse.

He did not admit the disorders imputed to the trade in all their extent. Pillage and kidnapping could not be general, on account of the populousness of the country; though too frequent instances of it had been proved. Crimes might be falsely imputed. This he admitted, but only partially. Witchcraft, he believed, was the secret of poisoning, and therefore deserved the severest punishment. That there should be a number of convictions for adultery, where polygamy was a custom, was not to be wondered at. But he feared, if a sale of these criminals were to be done away, massacre would be the substitute.

An honorable member had asked on a former day, "Is it an excuse for robbery, to say that another would have committed it?" But the Slave-



trade did not necessarily imply robbery. Not long since, Great Britain sold her convicts, indirectly at least, to slavery. But he was no advocate for the trade. He wished it had never been begun, and that it might soon terminate. But the means were not adequate to the end proposed.

Mr. Burke had said on a former occasion, "that in adopting the measure we must prepare to pay the price of our virtue." He was ready to pay his share of that price. But the effect of the purchase must be first ascertained. If they did not estimate this, it was not benevolence, but dissipation. Effects were to be duly appreciated; and though statesmen might rest every thing on a plausible manifesto of cause, the humbler moralist, meditating peace and good-will towards men, would venture to call such statesmen responsible for consequences.

In regard to the colonies, a sudden abolition would be oppression. The legislatures there should be led, and not forced, upon this occasion. He was persuaded they would act wisely to attain the end pointed out to them. They would see that a natural increase of their negroes might be effected by an improved system of legislation; and that in the result the Slave-trade would be no longer necessary.

A sudden abolition, also, would occasion dissatisfaction there. Supplies were necessary for some time to come. The negroes did not yet generally increase by birth. The graduation of

ages was not yet duly filled. These and many defects might be remedied, but not suddenly.

It would cause also distress there. The planters, not having their expected supplies, could not discharge their debts. Hence their slaves would be seized and sold. Nor was there any provision in this case against the separation of families, except as to the mother and infant child. These separations were one of the chief outrages complained of in Africa. Why, then, should we promote them in the West Indies? The confinement on board a slave-ship had been also bitterly complained of; but under distraint for the debt of a master, the poor slave might linger in a jail twice or thrice the time of the middle passage.

He again stated his abhorrence of the Slave-trade; but as a resource, though he hoped but a temporary one, it was of such consequence to the existence of the country, that it could not suddenly be withdrawn. The value of the imports and exports between Great Britain and the West Indies, including the excise and customs, was between seven and eight millions annually; and the tonnage of the ships employed, about an eighth of the whole tonnage of these kingdoms.

He complained that in the evidence the West India planters had been by no means spared. Cruel stories had been hastily and lightly told against them. Invidious comparisons had been made to their detriment. But it was well known that one of our best comic writers, when he wished to show benevolence in its fairest colors, had per-

sonified it in the character of the West Indian. He wished the slave might become as secure as the apprentice in this country : but it was necessary that the alarms concerning the abolition of the Slave-trade should, in the mean time, be quieted ; and he trusted that the good sense and true benevolence of the house would reject the present motion.

Mr. Matthew Montagu rose, and said a few words in support of the motion ; and, after condemning the trade in the strongest manner, he declared, that as long as he had life, he would use every faculty of his body and mind in endeavoring to promote its abolition.

Lord John Russel succeeded Mr. Montagu. He said, that although slavery was repugnant to his feelings, he must vote against the abolition, as visionary and delusive. It was a feeble attempt, without the power to serve the cause of humanity. Other nations would take up the trade. Whenever a bill of wise regulation should be brought forward, no man would be more ready than himself to lend his support. In this way, the rights of humanity might be asserted without injury to others. He hoped he should not incur censure by his vote ; for, let his understanding be what it might, he did not know that he had, notwithstanding the assertions of Mr. Fox, an inaccessible heart.

Mr. Stanley (agent for the islands) rose next. He felt himself called upon, he said, to refute the many calumnies which had for years been pro-

pagated against the planters (even through the medium of the pulpit, which should have been employed to better purposes,) and which had at length produced the mischievous measure which was now under the discussion of the house. A cry had been sounded forth, and from one end of the kingdom to the other; as if there had never been a slave from Adam to the present time. But it appeared to him to have been the intention of Providence, from the very beginning, that one set of men should be slaves to another. This truth was as old as it was universal. It was recognised in every history, under every government, and in every religion. Nor did the Christian religion itself, if the comments of Dr. Halifax, bishop of Gloucester, on a passage in St. Paul's epistle to the Corinthians were true, show more repugnance to slavery than any other.

He denied that the slaves were procured in the manner which had been described. It was the custom of all savages to kill their prisoners; and the Africans ought to be thankful that they had been carried safe into the British colonies.

As to the tales of misery in the middle passage, they were gross falsehoods; and as to their treatment in the West Indies, he knew personally that it was, in general, indulgent and humane.

With regard to promoting their increase by any better mode of treatment, he wished gentlemen would point it out to him. As a planter, he would thank them for it. It was absurd to suppose that he and others were blind to their own interest. It

was well known that one creole slave was worth two Africans: and their interest, therefore, must suggest to them, that the propagation of slaves was preferable to the purchase of imported negroes, of whom one-half very frequently died in the seasoning.

He then argued the impossibility of beasts doing the work of the plantations. He endeavored to prove that the number of these, adequate to this purpose, could not be supplied with food; and, after having made many other observations, which, on account of the lowness of his voice, could not be heard, he concluded by objecting to the motion.

Mr. William Smith rose. He wondered how the last speaker could have had the boldness to draw arguments from Scripture in support of the Slave-trade. Such arguments could be intended only to impose on those who never took the trouble of thinking for themselves. Could it be thought for a moment, that the good sense of the house could be misled by a few perverted or misapplied passages, in direct opposition to the whole tenor and spirit of Christianity; to the theory, he might say, of almost every religion, which had ever appeared in the world? Whatever might have been advanced, every body must feel that the Slave-trade could not exist an hour, if that excellent maxim, "to do to others as we would wish that others should do to us," had its proper influence on the conduct of men.

Nor was Mr. Stanley more happy in his argu-

ment of the antiquity and universality of slavery. Because a practice had existed, did it necessarily follow that it was just? By this argument, every crime might be defended from the time of Cain. The slaves of antiquity, however, were in a situation far preferable to that of the negroes in the West Indies. A passage in Macrobius, which exemplified this in the strongest manner, was now brought to his recollection. "Our ancestors," says Macrobius, "denominated the master father of the family, and the slave domestic, with the intention of removing all odium from the condition of the master, and all contempt from that of the servant." Could this language be applied to the present state of West India slavery?

It had been complained of by those who supported the trade, that they labored under great disadvantages by being obliged to contend against the most splendid abilities which the house could boast. But he believed they labored under one, which was worse, and for which no talents could compensate; he meant the impossibility of maintaining their ground fairly on any of those principles, which every man within those walls had been accustomed, from his infancy, to venerate as sacred. He and his friends too labored under some disadvantages. They had been charged with fanaticism. But what had Mr. Long said, when he addressed himself to those planters who were desirous of attempting improvements on their estates? He advised them "not to be diverted by partial views, vulgar prejudices, or the ridicule

which might spring from weak minds, from a benevolent attention to the public good." But neither by these nor by other charges were he or his friends to be diverted from the prosecution of their purpose. They were convinced of the rectitude and high importance of their object; and were determined never to desist from pursuing it, till it should be attained.

But they had to struggle with difficulties far more serious. The West Indian interest, which opposed them, was a collected body; of great power, affluence, connexions, and respectability.

Artifice had also been employed. Abolition and emancipation had been so often confounded, and by those who knew better, that it must have been purposely done, to throw an odium on the measure which was now before them.

The abolitionists had been also accused as the authors of the late insurrection in Dominica. A revolt had certainly taken place in that island. But revolts there had occurred frequently before. Mr. Stanley himself, in attempting to fix this charge upon them, had related circumstances, which amounted to their entire exculpation. He had said, that all was quiet there till the disturbances in the French islands; when some negroes from the latter had found their way to Dominica, and had excited the insurrection in question. He had also said, that the negroes in our own islands hated the idea of the abolition; for they thought, as no new laborers were to come in, they should be subjected to increased hard-

ships. But if they and their masters hated this same measure, how was this coincidence of sentiment to give birth to insurrections?

Other fallacies also had been industriously propagated. Of the African trade it had been said, that the exports amounted to a million annually; whereas, from the report on the table, it had on an average amounted to little more than half a million; and this included the articles for the purchase of African produce, which were of the value of a hundred and forty thousand pounds.

The East Indian trade, also, had been said to depend on the West Indian and the African. In the first place, it had but very little connexion with the former at all. Its connexion with the latter was principally on account of the saltpetre, which it furnished for making gunpowder. Out of nearly three millions of pounds in weight of the latter article, which had been exported in a year from this country, one-half had been sent to Africa alone; for the purposes, doubtless, of maintaining peace, and encouraging civilization among its various tribes! Four or five thousand persons were said also to depend for their bread in manufacturing guns for the African trade; and these, it was pretended, could not make guns of another sort. But where lay the difficulty? One of the witnesses had unravelled it. He had seen the negroes maimed by the bursting of these guns. They killed more from the butt than from the muzzle. Another had stated, that on the sea-coast the natives were afraid to fire a trade-gun.



In the West Indian commerce, two hundred and forty thousand tons of shipping were stated to be employed. But here deception intruded itself again. This statement included every vessel, great and small, which went from the British West Indies to America, and to the foreign islands; and, what was yet more unfair, all the repeated voyages of each throughout the year. The shipping, which could only fairly be brought into this account, did but just exceed half that which had been mentioned.

In a similar manner had the islands themselves been overrated. Their value had been computed, for the information of the privy council, at thirty-six millions; but the planters had estimated them at seventy. The truth, however, might possibly lie between these extremes. He by no means wished to depreciate their importance; but he did not like that such palpable misrepresentations should go unnoticed.

An honorable member (Colonel Tarleton) had disclaimed every attempt to interest the feelings of those present, but had desired to call them to reason and accounts. He also desired (though it was a question of feeling, if any one ever was) to draw the attention of the committee to reason and accounts; to the voice of reason instead of that of prejudice, and to accounts in the place of idle apprehensions. The result, he doubted not, would be a full persuasion that policy and justice were inseparable upon this, as upon every other occasion.

The same gentleman had enlarged on the injustice of depriving the Liverpool merchants of a business; on which were founded their honor and their fortunes. On what part of it they founded their honor, he could not conjecture, except from those passages in the evidence, where it appeared that their agents in Africa had systematically practised every fraud and villany, which the meanest and most unprincipled cunning could suggest, to impose on the ignorance of those with whom they traded.

The same gentleman had also lamented that the evidence had not been taken upon oath. He himself lamented it too. Numberless facts had been related by eye-witnesses, called in support of the abolition, so dreadfully atrocious, that they appeared incredible; and seemed rather, to use the expression of Ossian, like "the histories of the days of other times." These procured for the trade a species of acquittal, which it could not have obtained, had the committee been authorized to administer an oath. He apprehended also, in this case, that some other persons would have been rather more guarded in their testimony. Captain Knox would not then, perhaps, have told the committee, that six hundred slaves could have had comfortable room at night in his vessel of about one hundred and forty tons; when there could have been no more than five feet six inches in length, and fifteen inches in breadth, to about two-thirds of his number.

The same gentleman had also dwelt upon the

Slave-trade as a nursery for seamen. But it had appeared by the muster-rolls of the slave-vessels, then actually on the table of the house, that more than a fifth of them died in the service, exclusive of those who perished when discharged in the West Indies; and yet he had been instructed by his constituents to maintain this false position. His reasoning, too, was very curious; for, though numbers might die, yet as one-half, who entered, were landsmen, seamen were continually forming. Not to dwell on the expensive cruelty of forming these seamen by the yearly destruction of so many hundreds, this very statement was flatly contradicted by the evidence. The muster-rolls from Bristol stated the proportion of landsmen in the trade there at one-twelfth, and the proper officers of Liverpool itself at but a sixteenth, of the whole employed. In the face again of the most glaring facts, others had maintained that the mortality in these vessels did not exceed that of other trades in the tropical climates. But the same documents, which proved that twenty-three per cent. were destroyed in this wasting traffic, proved that in West India ships only about one and a half per cent. were lost, including every casualty. But the very men, under whose management this dreadful mortality had been constantly occurring, had coolly said, that much of it might be avoided by proper regulations. How criminal then were they, who, knowing this, had neither publicly proposed, nor in their practice adopted, a remedy!

The average loss of the slaves on board, which

had been calculated by Mr. Wilberforce at twelve and a half per cent., had been denied. He believed this calculation, taking in all the circumstances connected with it, to be true; but that for years not less than one-tenth had so perished, he would challenge those concerned in the traffic to disprove. Much evidence had been produced on the subject; but the voyages had been generally selected. There was only one, who had disclosed the whole account. This was Mr. Anderson of London, whose engagements in this trade had been very inconsiderable. His loss had only amounted to three per cent., but, unfortunately for the Slave-traders of Liverpool, his vessel had not taken above three-fourths of that number in proportion to the tonnage which they had stated to be necessary to the very existence of their trade.

An honorable member (Mr. Grosvenor) had attributed the protraction of this business to those who had introduced it. But from whom did the motion for further evidence (when that of the privy council was refused) originate, but from the enemies of the abolition? The same gentleman had said, it was impossible to abolish the trade; but where was the impossibility of forbidding the further importation of slaves into our own colonies? and beyond this, the motion did not extend.

The latter argument had also been advanced by Sir William Yonge and others. But allowing it its full force, would there be no honor in the dereliction of such a commerce? Would it be nothing publicly to recognise great and just prin-

ciples? Would our example be nothing? Yes: every country would learn, from our experiment, that American colonies could be cultivated without the necessity of continual supplies equally expensive and disgraceful.

But we might do more than merely lay down principles or propose examples. We might, in fact, diminish the evil itself immediately by no inconsiderable part, by the whole of our own supply: and here he could not at all agree with the honorable baronet, in what seemed to him a commercial paradox, that the taking away from an open trade by far the largest customer, and the lessening of the consumption of the article, would increase both the competition and the demand, and of course all those mischiefs which it was their intention to avert.

That civilization of the Africans was promoted, as had been asserted, by their intercourse with the Europeans, was void of foundation, as had appeared from the evidence. In manners and dishonesty they had indeed assimilated with those who frequented their coasts. But the greatest industry and the least corruption of morals were in the interior, where they were out of the way of this civilizing connexion.

To relieve Africa from famine, was another of the benign reasons which had been assigned for continuing the trade. That famines had occurred there, he did not doubt; but that they should annually occur, and with such arithmetical exactness as to suit the demands of the Slave-trade, was a

circumstance most extraordinary ; so wonderful, indeed, that, could it once be proved, he should consider it as a far better argument in favor of the divine approbation of that trade, than any which had ever yet been produced.

As to the effect of the abolition on the West Indies, it would give weight to every humane regulation which had been made ; by substituting a certain and obvious interest, in the place of one depending upon chances and calculation. An honorable member (Mr. Stanley) had spoken of the impossibility of cultivating the estates there without further importations of negroes ; and yet, of all the authorities he had brought to prove his case, there was scarcely one which might not be pressed to serve more or less effectually against him. Almost every planter he had named had found his negroes increase under the good treatment he had professed to give them ; and it was an axiom, throughout the whole evidence, that wherever they were well used, importations were not necessary. It had been said, indeed, by some adverse witnesses, that in Jamaica all possible means had been used to keep up the stock by breeding ; but how preposterous was this, when it was allowed that the morals of the slaves had been totally neglected, and that the planters preferred buying a larger proportion of males than females !

The misfortune was, that prejudice, and not reason, was the enemy to be subdued. The prejudices of the West Indians on these points

were numerous and inveterate. Mr. Long himself had characterized them on this account, in terms which he should have felt diffident in using. But Mr. Long had shown his own prejudices also. For he justified the chaining of the negroes on board the slave-vessels, on account of "their bloody, cruel, and malicious dispositions." But hear his commendation of some of the aborigines of Jamaica, who had miserably perished in caves, whither they had retired to escape the tyranny of the Spaniards. "These," says he, "left a glorious monument of their having disdained to survive the loss of their liberty and their country." And yet this same historian could not perceive that this natural love of liberty might operate as strongly and as laudably in the African negro, as in the Indian of Jamaica.

He was concerned to acknowledge that these prejudices were yet further strengthened by resentment against those who had taken an active part in the abolition of the Slave-trade. But it was never the object of these to throw a stigma on the whole body of the West Indians; but to prove the miserable effects of the trade. This it was their duty to do; and if, in doing this, disgraceful circumstances had come out, it was not their fault; and it must never be forgotten that they were true.

That the slaves were exposed to great misery in the islands was true, as well from inference as from facts; for what might not be expected from the use of arbitrary power, where the three char-

acters of party, judge, and executioner were united! The slaves, too, were more capable, on account of their passions, than the beasts of the field, of exciting the passions of their tyrants. To what a length the ill-treatment of them might be carried, might be learnt from the instance which General Tottenham mentioned to have seen in the year 1780, in the streets of Bridgetown, Barbadoes:—"A youth about nineteen, (to use his own words in the evidence,) entirely naked, with an iron collar about his neck, having five long projecting spikes. His body, both before and behind, was covered with wounds. His belly and thighs were almost cut to pieces, with running ulcers all over them; and a finger might have been laid in some of the weals. He could not sit down, because his hinder part was mortified; and it was impossible for him to lie down, on account of the prongs of his collar." He supplicated the general for relief. The latter asked, who had punished him so dreadfully? The youth answered, his master had done it. And because he could not work, this same master, in the same spirit of perversion which extorts from Scripture a justification of the Slave-trade, had fulfilled the apostolic maxim, that he should have nothing to eat. The use he meant to make of this instance was to show the unprotected state of the slaves. What must it be, where such an instance could pass not only unpunished, but almost unregarded! If, in the streets of London, but a dog were to be seen lacerated like this miserable man; how would the



cruelty of the wretch be execrated, who had thus even abused a brute !

The judicial punishments also inflicted upon the negro showed the low estimation in which, in consequence of the strength of old customs and deep-rooted prejudices, they were held. Mr. Edwards, in his speech to the assembly at Jamaica, stated the following case, as one which had happened in one of the rebellions there. Some slaves surrounded the dwelling-house of their mistress. She was in bed with a lovely infant. They deliberated upon the means of putting her to death in torment. But in the end one of them reserved her for his mistress ; and they killed her infant with an axe before her face. " Now," says Mr. Edwards, (addressing himself to his audience,) " you will think that no torments were too great for such horrible excesses. Nevertheless, I am of a different opinion. I think that death, unaccompanied with cruelty, should be the utmost exertion of human authority over our unhappy fellow-creatures." Torments, however, were always inflicted in these cases. The punishment was gibbeting alive, and exposing the delinquents to perish by the gradual effects of hunger, thirst, and a parching sun ; in which situation they were known to suffer for nine days, with a fortitude scarcely credible, never uttering a single groan. But horrible as the excesses might have been, which occasioned these punishments, it must be remembered, that they were committed by ignorant savages, who had been dragged from

all they held most dear ; whose patience had been exhausted by a cruel and loathsome confinement during their transportation ; and whose resentment had been wound up to the highest pitch of fury by the lash of the driver.

But he would now mention another instance, by way of contrast, out of the evidence. A child on board a slave-ship, of about ten months old, took sulk and would not eat. The captain flogged it with a cat, swearing that he would make it eat, or kill it. From this and other ill-treatment the child's legs swelled. He then ordered some water to be made hot to abate the swelling. But even his tender mercies were cruel ; for the cook, on putting his hand into the water, said it was too hot. Upon this the captain swore at him, and ordered the feet to be put in. This was done. The nails and skin came off. Oiled cloths were then put round them. The child was at length tied to a heavy log. Two or three days afterwards, the captain caught it up again, and repeated, that he would make it eat, or kill it. He immediately flogged it again, and in a quarter of an hour it died. But, after the child was dead, whom should the barbarian select to throw it overboard, but the wretched mother ? In vain she started from the office. He beat her, till he made her take up the child and carry it to the side of the vessel. She then dropped it into the sea, turning her head the other way that she might not see it.

Now it would naturally be asked, Was not this

captain also gibbeted alive? Alas! although the execrable barbarity of the European exceeded that of the Africans before mentioned, almost as much as his opportunities of instruction had been greater than theirs, no notice whatsoever was taken of this horrible action; and a thousand similar cruelties had been committed in this abominable trade with equal impunity; but he would say no more: He should vote for the abolition, not only as it would do away all the evils complained of in Africa and the middle passage; but as it would be the most effectual means of ameliorating the condition of those unhappy persons, who were still to continue slaves in the British colonies.

Mr. Courtenay rose. He said, he could not but consider the assertion of Sir William Yonge as a mistake, that the Slave-trade, if abandoned by us, would fall into the hands of France. It ought to be recollected, with what approbation the motion for abolishing it, made by the late Mirabeau, had been received; although the situation of the French colonies might then have presented obstacles to carrying the measure into immediate execution. He had no doubt, if parliament were to begin, so wise and enlightened a body as the national assembly would follow the example. But, even if France were not to relinquish the trade, how could we, if justice required its abolition, hesitate as to our part of it?

The trade, it had been said, was conducted upon the principles of humanity. Yes: we rescued the Africans from what we were pleased to call their

wretched situation in their own country, and then we took credit for our humanity; because, after having killed one-half of them in the seasoning, we substituted what we were again pleased to call a better treatment than that which they would have experienced at home.

It had been stated that the principle of war among savages was a general massacre. This was not true. They frequently adopted the captives into their own families; and, so far from massacring the women and children, they often gave them the protection which the weakness of their age and sex demanded.

There could be no doubt, that the practice of kidnapping prevailed in Africa. As to witchcraft, it had been made a crime in the reign of James the First in this country, for the purpose of informations; and how much more likely were informations to take place in Africa, under the encouragement afforded by the Slave-trade! This trade, it had been said, was sanctioned by twenty-six acts of parliament. He did not doubt but fifty-six might be found, by which parliament had sanctioned witchcraft; of the existence of which we had now no belief whatever.

It had been said by Mr. Stanley, that the pulpit had been used as an instrument of attack on the Slave-trade. He was happy to learn it had been so well employed; and he hoped the bishops would rise up in the house of lords, with the virtuous indignation which became them, to abolish

a traffic so contrary to humanity, justice, and religion.

He entreated every member to recollect, that on his vote that night depended the happiness of millions; and that it was then in his power to promote a measure, of which the benefits would be felt over one whole quarter of the globe; that the seeds of civilization might, by the present bill, be sown all over Africa; and the first principles of humanity be established in regions, where they had hitherto been excluded by the existence of this execrable trade.

Lord Carysfort rose and said, that the great cause of the abolition had flourished by the manner in which it had been opposed. No one argument of solid weight had been adduced against it. It had been shown, but never disproved, that the colonial laws were inadequate to the protection of the slaves; that the punishments of the latter were most unmerciful; that they were deprived of the right of self-defence against any white man; and, in short, that the system was totally repugnant to the principles of the British constitution.

Colonel Phipps followed Lord Carysfort. He denied that this was a question in which the rights of humanity and the laws of nature were concerned. The Africans became slaves in consequence of the constitution of their own governments. These were founded in absolute despotism. Every subject was an actual slave. The

inhabitants were slaves to the great men ; and the great men were slaves to the prince. Prisoners of war, too, were by law subject to slavery. Such being the case, he saw no more cruelty in disposing of them to our merchants, than to those of any other nation. Criminals also, in cases of adultery and witchcraft, became slaves by the same laws.

It had been said, that there were no regulations in the West Indies for the protection of slaves. There were several ; though he was ready to admit that more were necessary ; and he would go in this respect as far as humanity might require. He had passed ten months in Jamaica, where he had never seen any such acts of cruelty as had been talked of. Those which he had seen were not exercised by the whites, but by the blacks. The dreadful stories, which had been told, ought no more to fix a general stigma upon the planters, than the story of Mrs. Brownrigg to stamp this polished metropolis with the general brand of murder. There was once a haberdasher's wife (Mrs. Nairne) who locked up her apprentice girl, and starved her to death ; but did every body think of abolishing haberdashery on this account ? He was persuaded the negroes in the West Indies were cheerful and happy. They were fond of ornaments ; but it was not the characteristic of miserable persons to show a taste for finery. Such a state, on the contrary, implied a cheerful and contented mind. He was sorry to differ from his friend, Mr. Wilberforce, but he must oppose his motion.

Mr. Pitt rose, and said, that from the first hour of his having had the honor to sit in parliament down to the present, among all the questions, whether political or personal, in which it had been his fortune to take a share, there had never been one in which his heart was so deeply interested as in the present; both on account of the serious principles it involved, and the consequences connected with it.

The present was not a mere question of feeling. The argument, which ought in his opinion to determine the committee, was, that the Slave-trade was unjust. It was, therefore, such a trade as it was impossible for him to support, unless it could be first proved to him, that there were no laws of morality binding upon nations; and that it was not the duty of a legislature to restrain its subjects from invading the happiness of other countries, and from violating the fundamental principles of justice.

Several had stated the impracticability of the measure before them. They wished to see the trade abolished; but there was some necessity for continuing it, which they conceived to exist. Nay, almost every one, he believed, appeared to wish that the further importation of slaves might cease; provided it could be made out, that the population of the West Indies could be maintained without it. He proposed, therefore, to consider the latter point; for, as the impracticability of keeping up the population there appeared to operate as the chief objection, he trusted that, by showing it to be ill

founded, he should clear away all other obstacles whatever ; so that, having no ground either of justice or necessity to stand upon, there could be no excuse left to the committee for resisting the present motion.

He might reasonably, however, hope that they would not reckon any small or temporary disadvantage, which might arise from the abolition, to be a sufficient reason against it. It was surely not any slight degree of expediency, nor any small balance of profit, nor any light shades of probability on the one side rather than on the other, which would determine them on this question. He asked pardon even for the supposition. The Slave-trade was an evil of such magnitude, that there must be a common wish in the committee at once to put an end to it, if there were no great and serious obstacles. It was a trade, by which multitudes of unoffending nations were deprived of the blessings of civilization, and had their peace and happiness invaded. It ought, therefore, to be no common expediency, it ought to be nothing less than the utter ruin of our islands, which it became those to plead, who took upon them to defend the continuance of it

He could not help thinking that the West India gentlemen had manifested an over great degree of sensibility as to the point in question ; and that their alarms had been unreasonably excited upon it. He had examined the subject carefully for himself ; and he would now detail those reasons which had induced him firmly to believe, not only



that no permanent mischief would follow from the abolition; but not even any such temporary inconvenience, as could be stated to be a reason for preventing the house from agreeing to the motion before them; on the contrary, that the abolition itself would lay the foundation for the more solid improvement of all the various interests of those colonies.

In doing this, he should apply his observations chiefly to Jamaica, which contained more than half the slaves in the British West Indies; and if he should succeed in proving that no material detriment could arise to the population there, this would afford so strong a presumption with respect to the other islands, that the house could no longer hesitate whether they should, or should not, put a stop to this most horrid trade.

In the twenty years ending in 1788, the annual loss of slaves in Jamaica (that is, the excess of deaths above the births) appeared to be one in the hundred. In a preceding period the loss was greater; and, in a period before that, greater still; there having been a continual gradation in the decrease through the whole time. It might fairly be concluded, therefore, that (the average loss of the last period being one per cent.) the loss in the former part of it would be somewhat more, and in the latter part somewhat less, than one per cent.; insomuch that it might be fairly questioned, whether, by this time, the births and deaths in Jamaica might not be stated as nearly equal. It was to be added, that a peculiar calamity, which

swept away fifteen thousand slaves, had occasioned a part of the mortality in the last mentioned period. The probable loss, therefore, now to be expected, was very inconsiderable indeed.

There was, however, one circumstance to be added, which the West India gentlemen, in stating this matter, had entirely overlooked; and which was so material, as clearly to reduce the probable diminution in the population of Jamaica down to nothing. In all the calculations he had referred to of the comparative number of births and deaths, all the negroes in the island were included. The newly imported, who died in the seasoning, made a part. But these swelled, most materially, the number of the deaths. Now, as these extraordinary deaths would cease as soon as the importations ceased, a deduction of them ought to be made from his present calculation.

But the number of those, who thus died in the seasoning, would make up of itself nearly the whole of that one per cent. which had been stated. He particularly pressed an attention to this circumstance; for the complaint of being likely to want hands in Jamaica, arose from the mistake of including the present unnatural deaths, caused by the seasoning, among the natural and perpetual causes of mortality. These deaths, being erroneously taken into the calculations, gave the planters an idea that the numbers could not be kept up. These deaths, which were caused merely by the Slave-trade, furnished the very ground, therefore,

on which the continuance of that trade had been thought necessary.

The evidence as to this point was clear; for it would be found in that dreadful catalogue of deaths, arising from the seasoning and the passage, which the house had been condemned to look into, that one-half died. An annual mortality of two thousand slaves in Jamaica might be, therefore, charged to the importation; which, compared with the whole number on the island, hardly fell short of the whole one per cent. decrease.

Joining this with all the other considerations, he would then ask, Could the decrease of the slaves in Jamaica be such; could the colonies be so destitute of means; could the planters, when by their own accounts they were establishing, daily, new regulations for the benefit of the slaves; could they, under all these circumstances, be permitted to plead that total impossibility of keeping up their number, which they had rested on, as being, indeed, the only possible pretext for allowing fresh importations from Africa? He appealed therefore, to the sober judgment of all, whether the situation of Jamaica was such, as to justify a hesitation in agreeing to the present motion.

It might be observed also, that, when the importations should stop, that disproportion between the sexes, which was one of the obstacles to population, would gradually diminish; and a natural order of things be established. Through the want of this natural order, a thousand grievances were created, which it was impossible to define; and

which it was in vain to think that, under such circumstances, we could cure. But the abolition of itself would work this desirable effect. The West Indians would then feel a near and urgent interest to enter into a thousand little details, which it was impossible for him to describe, but which would have the greatest influence on population. A foundation would thus be laid for the general welfare of the islands; a new system would rise up, the reverse of the old; and eventually both their general wealth and happiness would increase.

He had now proved far more than he was bound to do; for, if he could only show that the abolition would not be ruinous, it would be enough. He could give up, therefore, three arguments out of four, through the whole of what he had said, and yet have enough left for his position. As to the creoles, they would undoubtedly increase. They differed in this entirely from the imported slaves, who were both a burden and a curse to themselves and others. The measure now proposed would operate like a charm; and, besides stopping all the miseries in Africa and the passage, would produce even more benefit in the West Indies than legal regulations could effect.

He would now just touch upon the question of emancipation. A rash emancipation of the slaves would be mischievous. In that unhappy situation, to which our baneful conduct had brought ourselves and them, it would be no justice on either side to give them liberty. They were, as yet, incapable of it; but their situation might be grad-

ually amended. They might be relieved from every thing harsh and severe ; raised from their present degraded state ; and put under the protection of the law. Till then, to talk of emancipation was insanity. But it was the system of fresh importations, which interfered with these principles of improvement ; and it was only the abolition which could establish them. This suggestion had its foundation in human nature. Wherever the incentive of honor, credit, and fair profit appeared, energy would spring up ; and when these laborers should have the natural springs of human action afforded them, they would then rise to the natural level of human industry.

From Jamaica, he would now go to the other islands. In Barbadoes, the slaves had rather increased. In St. Kitts, the decrease for fourteen years had been but three-fourths per cent. ; but here many of the observations would apply, which he had used in the case of Jamaica. In Antigua, many had died by a particular calamity. But for this, the decrease would have been trifling. In Nevis and Montserrat, there was little or no disproportion of the sexes ; so that it might well be hoped, that the numbers would be kept up in these islands. In Dominica, some controversy had arisen about the calculation ; but governor Orde had stated an increase of births above the deaths. From Grenada and St. Vincent's, no accurate accounts had been delivered in answer to the queries sent them ; but they were probably not in circumstances less favorable than in the other islands.

On a full review, then, of the state of the negro population in the West Indies, was there any serious ground of alarm from the abolition of the Slave-trade? Where was the impracticability, on which alone so many had rested their objections? Must we not blush at pretending that it would distress our consciences to accede to this measure, as far as the question of the negro population was concerned?

Intolerable were the mischiefs of this trade, both in its origin and through every stage of its progress. To say that slaves could be furnished us by fair and commercial means, was ridiculous. The trade sometimes ceased, as during the late war. The demand was more or less according to circumstances. But how was it possible, that to a demand so exceedingly fluctuating the supply should always exactly accommodate itself? Alas! we made human beings the subject of commerce; we talked of them as such; and yet we would not allow them the common principle of commerce, that the supply must accommodate itself to the consumption. It was not from wars, then, that the slaves were chiefly procured. They were obtained in proportion as they were wanted. If a demand for slaves arose, a supply was forced in one way or other; and it was in vain, overpowered as we then were with positive evidence, as well as the reasonableness of the supposition, to deny that by the Slave-trade we occasioned all the enormities which had been alleged against it.

Sir William Yonge had said, that if we were

not to take the Africans from their country, they would be destroyed. But he had not yet read, that all uncivilized nations destroyed their captives. We assumed, therefore, what was false. The very selling of them implied this: for, if they would sell their captives for profit, why should they not employ them so as to receive a profit also? Nay, many of them, while there was no demand from the slave-merchants, were often actually so employed. The trade, too, had been suspended during the war; and it was never said, or thought, that any such consequence had then followed.

The honorable baronet had also said, in justification of the Slave-trade, that witchcraft commonly implied poison, and was therefore a punishable crime; but did he recollect that not only the individual accused, but that his whole family, were sold as slaves? The truth was, we stopped the natural progress of civilization in Africa. We cut her off from the opportunity of improvement. We kept her down in a state of darkness, bondage, ignorance, and bloodshed. Was not this an awful consideration for this country? Look at the map of Africa, and see how little useful intercourse had been established on that vast continent! While other countries were assisting and enlightening each other, Africa alone had none of these benefits. We had obtained as yet only so much knowledge of her productions, as to show that there was a capacity for trade, which we checked. Indeed, if the mischiefs there were

out of the question, the circumstance of the middle passage alone, would, in his mind, be reason enough for the abolition. Such a scene as that of the slave-ships passing over with their wretched cargoes to the West Indies, if it could be spread before the eyes of the house, would be sufficient of itself to make them vote in favor of it; but when it could be added, that the interest even of the West Indies themselves rested on the accomplishment of this great event, he could not conceive an act of more imperious duty, than that which was imposed upon the house, of agreeing to the present motion.

Sir Archibald Edmonstone rose, and asked whether the present motion went so far, as to pledge those who voted for it to a total and immediate abolition.

Mr. Alderman Watson rose next. He defended the Slave-trade as highly beneficial to the country, being one material branch of its commerce. But he could not think of the African trade without connecting it with the West Indian. The one hung upon the other. A third important branch also depended upon it; which was the Newfoundland fishery: the latter could not go on, if it were not for the vast quantity of inferior fish bought up for the negroes in the West Indies; and which was quite unfit for any other market. If, therefore, we destroyed the African, we destroyed the other trades. Mr. Turgot, he said, had recommended in the national assembly of France the gradual abolition of the Slave-trade



He would therefore recommend it to the house to adopt the same measure, and to soften the rigors of slavery by wholesome regulations; but an immediate abolition he could not countenance.

Mr. Fox at length rose. He observed that some expressions, which he had used on the preceding day, had been complained of as too harsh and severe. He had since considered them, but he could not prevail upon himself to retract them; because, if any gentleman, after reading the evidence on the table, and attending to the debate, could avow himself an abetter of this shameful traffic in human flesh, it could only be either from some hardness of heart, or some difficulty of understanding, which he really knew not how to account for.

Some had considered this question as a question of political, whereas it was a question of personal freedom. Political freedom was undoubtedly a great blessing; but, when it came to be compared with personal, it sunk to nothing. To confound the two, served therefore to render all arguments on either perplexing and unintelligible. Personal freedom was the first right of every human being. It was a right, of which he who deprived a fellow-creature was absolutely criminal in so depriving him, and which he who withheld was no less criminal in withholding. He could not therefore retract his words with respect to any, who (whatever respect he might otherwise have for them) should, by their vote of that night, deprive their fellow-creatures of so great a blessing. Nay,

he would go further. He would say, that if the house, knowing what the trade was by the evidence, did not by their vote mark to all mankind their abhorrence of a practice so savage, so enormous, so repugnant to all laws human and divine, they would consign their character to eternal infamy.

That the pretence of danger to our West Indian islands from the abolition of the Slave-trade was totally unfounded, Mr. Wilberforce had abundantly proved: but if there were they, who had not been satisfied with that proof, was it possible to resist the arguments of Mr. Pitt on the same subject? It had been shown, on a comparison of the births and deaths in Jamaica, that there was not now any decrease of the slaves. But if there had been, it would have made no difference to him in his vote; for, had the mortality been ever so great there, he should have ascribed it to the system of importing negroes, instead of that of encouraging their natural increase. Was it not evident, that the planters thought it more convenient to buy them fit for work, than to breed them? Why, then, was this horrid trade to be kept up? To give the planters, truly, the liberty of misusing their slaves, so as to check population; for it was from ill usage only that, in a climate so natural to them, their numbers could diminish. The very ground, therefore, on which the planters rested the necessity of fresh importations, namely, the destruction of lives in the West Indies, was itself the strongest argument

that could be given, and furnished the most imperious call upon parliament, for the abolition of the trade.

Against this trade innumerable were the charges. An honorable member (Mr. Smith) had done well to introduce those tragical stories, which had made such an impression upon the house. No one of these had been yet controverted. It had indeed been said, that the cruelty of the African captain to the child was too bad to be true; and we had been desired to look at the cross-examination of the witnesses, as if we should find traces of the falsehood of his testimony there. But his cross-examination was peculiarly honorable to his character; for after he had been pressed, in the closest manner, by some able members of the house, the only inconsistency they could fix upon him was, whether the fact had happened on the same day of the same month of the year 1764 or the year 1765.

But it was idle to talk of the incredibility of such instances. It was not denied, that absolute power was exercised by the slave-captains; and if this was granted, all the cruelties charged upon them would naturally follow. Never did he hear of charges so black and horrible as those contained in the evidence on the table. They unfolded such a scene of cruelty, that if the house, with all their present knowledge of the circumstances, should dare to vote for its continuance, they must have nerves, of which he had no conception. We might find instances, indeed,

in history, of men violating the feelings of nature on extraordinary occasions. Fathers had sacrificed their sons and daughters, and husbands their wives; but to imitate their characters, we ought to have not only nerves as strong as the two Brutuses, but to take care that we had a cause as good; or that we had motives for such a dereliction of our feelings as patriotic as those, which historians had annexed to these when they handed them to the notice of the world.

But what was our motive in the case before us? To continue a trade which was a wholesale sacrifice of a whole order and race of our fellow-creatures; which carried them away by force from their native country, in order to subject them to the mere will and caprice, the tyranny and oppression, of other human beings, for their whole natural lives, them and their posterity for ever!! Oh most monstrous wickedness! Oh unparalleled barbarity! And, what was more aggravating, this most complicated scene of robbery and murder which mankind had ever witnessed, had been honored by the name of...trade.

That a number of human beings should be at all times ready to be furnished as fair articles of commerce, just as our occasions might require, was absurd. The argument of Mr. Pitt on this head was unanswerable. Our demand was fluctuating: it entirely ceased at some times: at others it was great and pressing. How was it possible, on every sudden call, to furnish a sufficient return in slaves, without resorting to those

execrable means of obtaining them, which were stated in the evidence? These were of three sorts, and he would now examine them.

Captives in war, it was urged, were consigned either to death or slavery. This, however, he believed to be false in point of fact. But suppose it were true; did it not become us, with whom it was a custom, founded in the wisest policy, to pay the captives a peculiar respect and civility, to inculcate the same principles in Africa? But we were so far from doing this, that we encouraged wars for the sake of taking, not men's goods and possessions, but men themselves; and it was not the war which was the cause of the Slave-trade, but the Slave-trade which was the cause of the war. It was the practice of the slave-merchants to try to intoxicate the African kings, in order to turn them to their purpose. A particular instance occurred in the evidence, of a prince, who, when sober, resisted their wishes; but in the moment of inebriety he gave the word for war, attacked the next village, and sold the inhabitants to the merchants.

The second mode was kidnapping. He referred the house to various instances of this in the evidence: but there was one, in particular, from which we might immediately infer the frequency of the practice. A black trader had kidnapped a girl, and sold her; but he was presently afterwards kidnapped and sold himself; and, when he asked the captain who bought him, "What! do you buy me, who am a great trader?" the only

answer was, "Yes, I will buy you, or her, or any body else, provided any one will sell you;" and accordingly both the trader and the girl were carried to the West Indies and sold for slaves.

The third mode of obtaining slaves was by crimes committed or imputed. One of these was adultery. But was Africa the place, where Englishmen, above all others, were to go to find out and punish adulterers? Did it become us to cast the first stone? It was a most extraordinary pilgrimage for a most extraordinary purpose! And yet upon this plea we justified our right of carrying off its inhabitants. The offence alleged next was witchcraft. What a reproach it was to lend ourselves to this superstition! Yes, we stood by; we heard the trial; we knew the crime to be impossible; and that the accused must be innocent: but we waited in patient silence for his condemnation; and then we lent our friendly aid to the police of the country, by buying the wretched convict, with all his family, whom, for the benefit of Africa, we carried away also into perpetual slavery.

With respect to the situation of the slaves in their transportation, he knew not how to give the house a more correct idea of the horrors of it, than by referring them to the printed section of the slave-ship; where the eye might see what the tongue must fall short in describing. On this dismal part of the subject he would not dwell. He would only observe, that the acts of barbarity, related of the slave-captains in these voyages, were

so extravagant, that they had been attributed in some instances to insanity. But was not this the insanity of arbitrary power? Who ever read the facts recorded of Nero, without suspecting he was mad? Who would not be apt to impute insanity to Caligula, or Domitian, or Caracalla, or Commodus, or Heliogabalus? Here were six Roman emperors, not connected in blood, nor by descent, who, each of them, possessing arbitrary power, had been so distinguished for cruelty, that nothing short of insanity could be imputed to them. Was not the insanity of the masters of slave-ships to be accounted for on the same principles?

Of the slaves in the West Indies it had been said, that they were taken from a worse state to a better. An honorable member (Mr. W. Smith) had quoted some instances out of the evidence to the contrary. He also would quote one or two others. A slave under hard usage had run away. To prevent a repetition of the offence, his owner sent for his surgeon, and desired him to cut off the man's leg. The surgeon refused. The owner, to render it a matter of duty in the surgeon, broke it. "Now," says he, "you must cut it off; or the man will die." We might console ourselves, perhaps, that this happened in a French island; but he would select another instance, which had happened in one of our own. Mr. Ross heard the shrieks of a female issuing from an out-house; and so piercing, that he determined to see what was going on. On looking in, he perceived a young female tied up to a beam by her wrists;

entirely naked ; and in the act of involuntary writhing and swinging ; while the author of her torture was standing below her with a lighted torch in his hand, which he applied to all the parts of her body as it approached him. What crime this miserable woman had perpetrated, he knew not ; but the human mind could not conceive a crime warranting such a punishment.

He was glad to see that these tales affected the house. Would they then sanction enormities, the bare recital of which made them shudder ? Let them remember that humanity did not consist in a squeamish ear. It did not consist in shrinking and starting at such tales as these ; but in a disposition of the heart to remedy the evils they unfolded. Humanity belonged rather to the mind than to the nerves. But, if so, it should prompt men to charitable exertion. Such exertion was necessary in the present case. It was necessary for the credit of our jurisprudence at home, and our character abroad. For what would any man think of our justice, who should see another hanged for a crime, which would be innocence itself, if compared with those enormities which were allowed in Africa and the West Indies under the sanction of the British parliament ?

It had been said, however, in justification of the trade, that the Africans were less happy at home than in the islands. But what right had we to be judges of their condition ? They would tell us a very different tale, if they were asked. But it was ridiculous to say that we bettered their con-



dition, when we dragged them from every thing dear in life to the most abject state of slavery.

One argument had been used, which, for a subject so grave, was the most ridiculous he had ever heard. Mr. Alderman Watson had declared the Slave-trade to be necessary, on account of its connexion with our fisheries. But what was this but an acknowledgment of the manner in which these miserable beings were treated? The trade was to be kept up, with all its enormities, in order that there might be persons to consume the refuse fish from Newfoundland, which was too bad for anybody else to eat!

It had been said that England ought not to abolish the Slave-trade, unless other nations would also give it up. But what kind of morality was this? The trade was defensible upon no other principle than that of a highwayman. Great Britain could not keep it up on these terms. Mere gain was not a motive for a great country to rest on, as a justification of any measure. Honor was its superior; and justice was superior to honor.

With regard to the emancipation of those in slavery, he coincided with Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Pitt; and upon this principle, that it might be as dangerous to give freedom at once to a man used to slavery, as in the case of a man who had never seen daylight, to expose him all at once to the full glare of a meridian sun.

With respect to the intellect and sensibility of the Africans, it was pride only which suggested a difference between them and ourselves. There

was a remarkable instance to the point in the evidence, and which he would quote. In one of the slave-ships was a person of consequence; a man, once high in a military station, and with a mind not insensible to the eminence of his rank. He had been taken captive and sold; and was then in the hold, confined promiscuously with the rest. Happening in the night to fall asleep, he dreamed that he was in his own country; high in honor and command; caressed by his family and friends; waited on by his domestics; and surrounded with all his former comforts in life. But, awaking suddenly, and finding where he was, he was heard to burst into the loudest groans and lamentations on the miserable contrast of his present state; mixed with the meanest of his subjects; and subjected to the insolence of wretches a thousand times lower than himself in every kind of endowment. He appealed to the house, whether this was not as moving a picture of the miserable effects of the Slave-trade, as could be well imagined. There was one way, by which they might judge of it. Let them make the case their own. This was the Christian rule of judging; and, having mentioned Christianity, he was sorry to find that any should suppose that it had given countenance to such a system of oppression. So far was this from being the case, that he thought it one of the most splendid triumphs of this religion, that it had caused slavery to be so generally abolished on its appearance in the world. It had done this, by teaching us, among other beautiful

precepts, that, in the sight of their Maker, all mankind were equal. Its influence appeared to have been more powerful in this respect than that of all the ancient systems of philosophy; though even in these, in point of theory, we might trace great liberality and consideration for human rights. Where could be found finer sentiments of liberty than in Demosthenes and Cicero? Where bolder assertions of the rights of mankind, than in Tacitus and Thucydides? But, alas! these were the holders of slaves! It was not so with those who had been converted to Christianity. He knew, however, that what he had been ascribing to Christianity had been imputed by others to the advances which philosophy had made. Each of the two parties took the merit to itself. The philosopher gave it to philosophy, and the divine to religion. He should not then dispute with either of them; but as both coveted the praise, why should they not emulate each other by promoting this improvement in the condition of the human race?

He would now conclude by declaring that the whole country, indeed the whole civilized world, must rejoice that such a bill as the present had been moved for, not merely as a matter of humanity, but as an act of justice; for he would put humanity out of the case. Could it be called humanity to forbear from committing murder? Exactly upon this ground did the present motion stand; being strictly a question of national justice. He thanked Mr. Wilberforce for having pledged

himself so strongly to pursue his object till it was accomplished ; and, as for himself, he declared, that in whatever situation he might ever be, he would use his warmest efforts for the promotion of this righteous cause.

Mr. Stanley (the member for Lancashire) rose, and declared that, when he came into the house, he intended to vote against the abolition ; but that the impression made both on his feelings and on his understanding was such, that he could not persist in his resolution. He was now convinced that the entire abolition of the Slave-trade was called for equally by sound policy and justice. He thought it right and fair to avow manfully this change in his opinion. The abolition, he was sure, could not long fail of being carried. The arguments for it were irresistible.

The honorable Mr. Ryder said, that he came to the house, not exactly in the same circumstances as Mr. Stanley, but very undecided on the subject. He was, however, so strongly convinced by the arguments he had heard, that he was become equally earnest for the abolition.

Mr. Smith (member for Pontefract) said, that he should not trouble the house at so late an hour, further than to enter his protest, in the most solemn manner, against this trade, which he considered as most disgraceful to the country, and contrary to all the principles of justice and religion.

Mr. Sumner declared himself against the total, immediate, and unqualified abolition, which he

thought would wound at least the prejudices of the West Indians, and might do mischief; but a gradual abolition should have his hearty support.

Major Scott declared there was no member in the house, who would give a more independent vote upon this question than himself. He had no concern either in the African or West Indian trades; but in the present state of the finances of the country, he thought it would be a dangerous experiment to risk any one branch of our foreign commerce. As far as regulation would go, he would join in the measure.

Mr. Burke said he would use but few words. He declared that he had for a long time had his mind drawn towards this great subject. He had even prepared a bill for the regulation of the trade, conceiving at that time that the immediate abolition of it was a thing hardly to be hoped for; but when he found that Mr. Wilberforce had seriously undertaken the work, and that his motion was for the abolition, which he approved much more than his own, he had burnt his papers; and made an offering of them in honor of his nobler proposition, much in the same manner as we read that the curious books were offered up and burnt at the approach of the Gospel. He highly applauded the confessions of Mr. Stanley and Mr. Ryder. It would be a glorious tale for them to tell their constituents, that it was impossible for them, however prejudiced, if sent to hear discussion in that house, to avoid surrendering up their hearts and judgments at the shrine of reason.

Mr. Drake said that he would oppose the abolition to the utmost. We had by a want of prudent conduct lost America. The house should be aware of being carried away by the meteors with which they had been dazzled. The leaders, it was true, were for the abolition; but the minor orators, the dwarfs, the pigmies, he trusted, would that night carry the question against them. The property of the West Indians was at stake; and, though men might be generous with their own property, they should not be so with the property of others.

Lord Sheffield reprobated the overbearing language, which had been used by some gentlemen towards others, who differed in opinion from them on a subject of so much difficulty as the present. He protested against a debate, in which he could trace nothing like reason; but, on the contrary, downright phrensy, raised perhaps by the most extraordinary eloquence. The abolition, as proposed, was impracticable. He denied the right of the legislature to pass a law for it. He warned the chancellor of the exchequer to beware of the day on which the bill should pass, as the worst he had ever seen.

Mr. Milnes declared, that he adopted all those expressions against the Slave-trade, which had been thought so harsh; and that the opinion of the noble lord had been turned in consequence of having become one of the members for Bristol. He quoted a passage from Lord Sheffield's pamphlet; and insisted that the separation of

families in the West Indies, there complained of by himself, ought to have compelled him to take the contrary side of the question.

Mr. Wilberforce made a short reply to some arguments in the course of the debate; after which, at half past three in the morning, the house divided. There appeared for Mr. Wilberforce's motion eighty-eight, and against it one hundred and sixty-three; so that it was lost by a majority of seventy-five votes.

By this unfavorable division, the great contest, in which we had been so long engaged, was decided. We were obliged to give way to superior numbers. Our fall, however, grievous as it was, was rendered more tolerable by the circumstance of having been prepared to expect it. It was rendered more tolerable also by other considerations; for we had the pleasure of knowing, that we had several of the most distinguished characters in the kingdom, and almost all the splendid talents of the house of commons,\* in our favor.

\* It is a pity that no perfect list was ever made of this or of any other division in the house of commons on this subject. I can give, however, the names of the following members, as having voted for Mr. Wilberforce's motion at this time:

Mr. Pitt,	Lord Bayham,	Mr. Duncombe,
Mr. Fox,	Lord Arden,	Mr. Martin,
Mr. Burke,	Lord Carysfort,	Mr. Milnes,
Mr. Grey,	Lord Muncaster,	Mr. Steele,
Mr. Windham,	Lord Barnard,	Mr. Coke,
Mr. Sheridan,	Lord North,	Mr. Elliott,
Mr. Whitbread,	Lord Euston,	Mr. Montagu,
Mr. Courtenay,	General Burgoyne,	Mr. Bastard,
Mr. Francis,	Hon. R. Fitzpatrick,	Mr. Stanley,

We knew, too, that the question had not been carried against us either by evidence or by argument; but that we were the victims of the accidents and circumstances of the times. And as these considerations comforted us, when we looked forward to future operations on this great question, so we found great consolation as to the past, in believing, that, unless human constitutions were stronger than they really were, we could not have done more than we had done towards the furtherance of the cause.

The committee for the abolition held a meeting soon after this our defeat. It was the most impressive I ever attended. The looks of all bespoke the feelings of their hearts. Little was said previously to the opening of the business; and, after it was opened, it was conducted with a kind of solemn dignity, which became the occasion. The committee, in the course of its deliberations, came to the following resolutions:—

That the thanks of this committee be respectfully given to the illustrious minority of the house of commons, who lately stood forth the asserters of British justice and humanity, and the enemies of a traffic in the blood of man.

That our acknowledgments are particularly

Mr. Wilberforce,	Sir William Dolben,	Mr. Plumer,
Mr. Ryder,	Sir Henry Houghton,	Mr. Beaufoy,
Mr. William Smith,	Sir Edward Lyttleton,	Mr. I. H. Browne,
Mr. John Smyth,	Sir William Scott,	Mr. G. N. Edwards,
Mr. Robert Smith,	Mr. Samuel Thornton,	Mr. W. M. Pitt,
Mr. Powys,	Mr. Henry Thornton,	Mr. Bankes,
Lord Apsley,	Mr. Robert Thornton,	



due to William Wilberforce, esquire, for his unwearied exertions to remove this opprobrium of our national character; and to the right honorable William Pitt, and the right honorable Charles James Fox, for their virtuous and dignified co-operation in the same cause.

That the solemn declarations of these gentlemen, and of Matthew Montagu and William Smith, esquires, that they will not relinquish, but with life, their struggle for the abolition of the Slave-trade, are not only highly honorable to themselves as Britons, as statesmen, and as Christians, but must eventually, as the light of evidence shall be more and more diffused, be seconded by the good wishes of every man not immediately interested in the continuance of that detestable commerce.

And, lastly, that anticipating the opposition they should have to sustain from persons trained to a familiarity with the rapine and desolation necessarily attendant on the Slave-trade, and sensible also of the prejudices which implicitly arise from long-established usages, this committee consider the late decision in the house of commons as a delay, rather than a defeat. In addressing a free and enlightened nation on a subject, in which its justice, its humanity, and its wisdom are involved, they cannot despair of final success; and they do hereby, under an increasing conviction of the excellence of their cause, and in conformity to the distinguished examples before them, renew their firm protestation, that they will never

desist from appealing to their countrymen, till the commercial intercourse with Africa shall cease to be polluted with the blood of its inhabitants.

These resolutions were published, and they were followed by a suitable report.

The committee, in order to strengthen themselves for the prosecution of their great work, elected Sir William Dolben, bart., Henry Thornton, Lewis Alexander Grant, and Matthew Montagu, esquires, who were members of parliament, and Truman Harford, Josiah Wedgwood, jun. esquire, and John Clarkson, esquire, of the royal navy, as members of their own body; and they elected the reverend archdeacon Plymley (now Corbett) an honorary and corresponding member, in consequence of the great services which he had rendered their cause in the shires of Hereford and Salop, and the adjacent counties of Wales.

The several committees, established in the country, on receiving the resolutions and report as before mentioned, testified their sympathy in letters of condolence to that of London on the late melancholy occasion; and expressed their determination to support it as long as any vestiges of this barbarous traffic should remain.

At length the session ended; and though, in the course of it, the afflicting loss of the general question had occurred, there was yet an attempt made by the abolitionists in parliament, which met with a better fate. The Sierra Leone company received the sanction of the legislature. The object of this institution was to colonize a

small portion of the coast of Africa. They, who were to settle there, were to have no concern in the Slave-trade, but to discourage it as much as possible. They were to endeavor to establish a new species of commerce, and to promote cultivation in its neighborhood by free labor. The persons more generally fixed upon for colonists, were such negroes, with their wives and families, as chose to abandon their habitations in Nova Scotia. These had followed the British arms in America: and had been settled there, as a reward for their services, by the British government. My brother, just mentioned to have been chosen a member of the committee, and who had essentially served the great cause of the abolition on many occasions, undertook a visit to Nova Scotia, to see if those in question were willing to undergo the change; and in that case to provide transports, and conduct them to Sierra Leone. This object he accomplished. He embarked more than eleven hundred persons in fifteen vessels, of all which he took the command. On landing them, he became the first governor of the new colony. Having laid the foundation of it, he returned to England; when a successor was appointed. From that time many unexpected circumstances, but particularly devastations by the French in the beginning of the war, took place, which contributed to ruin the trading company which was attached to it. It is pleasing, however, to reflect, that though the object of the institution, as far as mercantile profit was concerned, thus failed,

the other objects belonging to it were promoted. Schools, places of worship, agriculture, and the habits of civilized life, were established. Sierra Leone, therefore, now presents itself as the medium of civilization for Africa. And, in this latter point of view, it is worth all the treasure which has been lost in supporting it: for the Slave-trade, which was the great obstacle to this civilization, being now happily abolished, there is a metropolis, consisting of some hundreds of persons, from which may issue the seeds of reformation to this injured continent; and which, when sown, may be expected to grow into fruit without interruption. New schools may be transplanted from thence into the interior. Teachers, and travellers on discovery, may be sent from thence in various directions; who may return to it occasionally as to their homes. The natives too, able now to travel in safety, may resort to it from various parts. They may see the improvements which are going on from time to time. They may send their children to it for education. And thus it may become the medium\* of a great intercourse between England and Africa, to the benefit of each other.

\* To promote this desirable end, an association took place last year, called the African Institution, under the patronage of the duke of Gloucester, as president, and of the friends to the African cause, particularly of such as were in parliament, and as belonged to the committee for the abolition of the Slave-trade.

## CHAPTER II.

CONTINUATION FROM JULY, 1791, TO JULY, 1792—AUTHOR TRAVELS ROUND THE KINGDOM AGAIN—OBJECT OF HIS JOURNEY—PEOPLE BEGIN TO LEAVE OFF THE USE OF SUGAR—TO FORM COMMITTEES—AND TO SEND PETITIONS TO PARLIAMENT—MOTION MADE IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS FOR THE IMMEDIATE ABOLITION OF THE TRADE—DEBATES UPON IT—ABOLITION RESOLVED UPON, BUT NOT TO COMMENCE TILL 1796—RESOLUTION TAKEN TO THE LORDS—LATTER DETERMINE UPON HEARING EVIDENCE—EVIDENCE AT LENGTH INTRODUCED—FURTHER HEARING OF IT POSTPONED TO THE NEXT SESSION.

THE defeat which we had just sustained, was a matter of great triumph to our opponents. When they considered the majority in the house of commons in their favor, they viewed the resolutions of the committee, which have been detailed, as the last spiteful effort of a vanquished and dying animal, and they supposed that they had consigned the question to eternal sleep. The committee, however, were too deeply attached to the cause, vanquished as they were, to desert it; and they knew, also, too well the barometer of public feeling, and the occasion of its fluctuations, to despair. In the year 1787, the members of the house of commons, as well as the people, were enthusiastic in behalf of the abolition of the trade. In the year 1788, the fair enthusiasm of the former began to fade. In 1789 it died. In 1790, prejudice started up as a noxious weed in its place. In 1791, this prejudice arrived at its growth. But to what were these changes owing? To delay;

during which the mind, having been gradually led to the question as a commercial, had been gradually taken from it as a moral object. But it was possible to restore the mind to its proper place. Add to which, that the nation had never deserted the cause during this whole period.

It is much to the honor of the English people, that they should have continued to feel for the existence of an evil which was so far removed from their sight. But at this moment their feelings began to be insupportable. Many of them resolved, as soon as parliament had rejected the bill, to abstain from the use of West Indian produce. In this state of things, a pamphlet, written by William Bell Crafton, of Tewksbury, and called "A Sketch of the Evidence, with a Recommendation on the Subject to the serious Attention of People in general," made its appearance; and another followed it, written by William Fox, of London, "On the Propriety of abstaining from West India Sugar and Rum." These pamphlets took the same ground. They inculcated abstinence from these articles as a moral duty; they inculcated it as a peaceable and constitutional measure; and they laid before the reader a truth, which was sufficiently obvious, that if each would abstain, the people would have a complete remedy for this enormous evil in their own power.

While these things were going on, it devolved upon me to arrange all the evidence on the part of the abolition under proper heads, and to abridge it into one volume. It was intended that a copy

of this should be sent into different towns of the kingdom, that all might know, if possible, the horrors (as far as the evidence contained them) of this execrable trade; and as it was possible that these copies might lie in the places where they were sent, without a due attention to their contents, I resolved, with the approbation of the committee, to take a journey, and for no other purpose than personally to recommend that they might be read.

The books, having been printed, were despatched before me. Of this tour I shall give the reader no other account than that of the progress of the remedy, which the people were then taking into their own hands. And first I may observe, that there was no town, through which I passed, in which there was not some one individual who had left off the use of sugar. In the smaller towns, there were from ten to fifty by estimation; and in the larger, from two to five hundred, who had made this sacrifice to virtue. These were of all ranks and parties. Rich and poor, churchmen and dissenters, had adopted the measure. Even grocers had left off trading in the article, in some places. In gentlemen's families, where the master had set the example, the servants had often voluntarily followed it; and even children, who were capable of understanding the history of the sufferings of the Africans, excluded, with the most virtuous resolution, the sweets, to which they had been accustomed, from their lips. By the best computation I was able to make from notes taken

down in my journey, no fewer than three hundred thousand persons had abandoned the use of sugar.

Having travelled over Wales, and two-thirds of England, I found it would be impossible to visit Scotland on the same errand. I had already, by moving upwards and downwards in parallel lines, and by intersecting these in the same manner, passed over six thousand miles. By the best calculation I could make, I had yet two thousand to perform. By means of almost incessant journeyings night and day, I had suffered much in my health. My strength was failing daily. I wrote, therefore, to the committee on this subject; and they communicated immediately with Dr. Dickson, who, on being applied to, visited Scotland in my stead. He consulted first with the committee at Edinburgh relative to the circulation of the Abridgment of the Evidence. He then pursued his journey, and, in conjunction with the unwearyed efforts of Mr. Campbell Haliburton, rendered essential service to the cause for this part of the kingdom.

On my return to London, I found that the committee had taken into their own body T. F. Forster, B. M. Forster, and James West, esquires, as members; and that they had elected Hercules Ross, esquire, an honorary and corresponding member, in consequence of the handsome manner in which he had come forward as an evidence, and of the peculiar benefit which had resulted from his testimony to the cause.

The effects of the two journeys by Dr. Dickson



and myself were soon visible. The people could not bear the facts which had been disclosed to them by the Abridgment of the Evidence. They were not satisfied, many of them, with the mere abstinence from sugar; but began to form committees to correspond with that of London. The first of these appeared at Newcastle upon Tyne, so early as the month of October. It consisted of the Reverend William Turner, as chairman, and of Robert Ormston, William Batson, Henry Taylor, Ralph Bainbridge, George Brown, Hawden Bragg, David Sutton, Anthony Clapham, George Richardson, and Edward Prowit. It received a valuable addition afterwards by the admission of many others. The second was established at Nottingham. The Reverend Jeremiah Bigsby became the president, and the Reverend G. Walker and J. Smith, and Messrs. Dennison, Evans, Watson, Hart, Storer, Bott, Hawkesley, Pennington, Wright, Frith, Hall, and Wakefield, the committee. The third was formed at Glasgow, under the patronage of David Dale, Scott Moncrieff, Robert Graham, Professor Millar, and others. Other committees started up in their turn. At length, public meetings began to take place, and, after this, petitions to be sent to parliament; and these so generally, that there was not a day for three months, Sundays excepted, in which five or six were not resolved upon in some places or other in the kingdom.

Of the enthusiasm of the nation at this time, none can form an opinion but they who witnessed

it. There never was, perhaps, a season when so much virtuous feeling pervaded all ranks. Great pains were taken by interested persons in many places to prevent public meetings. But no efforts could avail. The current ran with such strength and rapidity, that it was impossible to stem it. In the city of London a remarkable instance occurred. The livery had been long waiting for the common council to begin a petition. But the lord mayor and several of the aldermen stifled it. The former, indignant at this conduct, insisted upon a common hall. A day was appointed; and, though the notice given of it was short, the assemblage was greater than had ever been remembered on any former occasion. Scarcely a liveryman was absent, unless sick, or previously engaged. The petition, when introduced, was opposed by those who had prevented it in the common council. But their voices were drowned amidst groans and hissings. It was shortly after carried; and it had not been signed more than half an hour, before it was within the walls of the house of commons. The reason of this extraordinary despatch was, that it had been kept back by intrigue so late, that the very hour, in which it was delivered to the house, was that in which Mr. Wilberforce was to make his new motion.

And as no petitions were ever more respectable than those presented on this occasion, as far as they breathed the voice of the people, and as far as they were founded on a knowledge of the object which they solicited, so none were ever more

numerous, as far as we have any record of such transactions. Not fewer than three hundred and ten were presented from England; one hundred and eighty-seven from Scotland; and twenty from Wales. Two other petitions also for the abolition came from England, but they were too late for delivery. On the other side of the question, one was presented from the town of Reading for regulation, in opposition to that for abolition from the same place. There were also four against abolition. The first of these was from certain persons at Derby, in opposition to the other from that town. The second was from Stephen Fuller, esquire, as agent for Jamaica. The third from J. Dawson, esquire, a slave-merchant at Liverpool. And the fourth from the merchants, planters, mortgagees, annuitants, and others concerned in the West Indian colonies. Taking in all these statements, the account stood thus: for regulation, there was one; against all abolition, there were four; and for the total abolition of the trade, five hundred and nineteen.

On the second of April Mr. Wilberforce moved the order of the day; which having been agreed to, Sir William Dolben was put into the chair.

He then began by soliciting the candid attention of the West Indians to what he was going to deliver to the house. However others might have censured them indiscriminately, he had always himself made a distinction between them and their system. It was the latter only, which he reprobated. If aristocracy had been thought

a worse form of government than monarchy, because the people had many tyrants instead of one, how objectionable must be that form of it, which existed in our colonies! Arbitrary power could be bought there by any one who could buy a slave. The fierceness of it was doubtless restrained by an elevation of mind in many, as arising from a consciousness of superior rank and consequence: but, alas! it was too often exercised there by the base and vulgar. The more liberal, too, of the planters were not resident upon their estates. Hence a promiscuous censure of them would be unjust, though their system would undoubtedly be odious.

As for the cure of this monstrous evil, he had shown, last year, that internal regulations would not produce it. These could have no effect, while the evidence of slaves was inadmissible. What would be the situation of the bulk of the people of this country, if only gentlemen of five hundred a year were admitted as evidences in our courts of law? Neither was the cure of it in the emancipation of the slaves. He did not deny that he wished them this latter blessing. But, alas! in their present degraded state, they were unfit for it! Liberty was the child of reason and order. It was indeed a plant of celestial growth, but the soil must be prepared for its reception. He, who would see it flourish and bring forth its proper fruit, must not think it sufficient to let it shoot in unrestrained licentiousness. But if this inestimable blessing was ever to be imparted to them, the

cause must be removed, which obstructed its introduction. In short, no effectual remedy could be found, but in the abolition of the Slave-trade.

He then took a copious view of the advantages which would arise both to the master and to the slave, if this traffic were done away; and having recapitulated and answered the different objections to such a measure, he went to that part of the subject, in which he described himself to be most interested.

He had shown, he said, last year, that Africa was exposed to all the horrors of war; and that most of these wars had their origin in the Slave-trade. It was then said, in reply, that the natural barbarity of the natives was alone sufficient to render their country a scene of carnage. This was triumphantly instanced in the king of Dahomey. But his honorable friend, Lord Muncaster, then in the house, had proved in his interesting publication, which had appeared since, called *Historical Sketches of the Slave-trade and of its effects in Africa*, addressed to the people of Great Britain, that the very cruelties of this king, on which so much stress had been laid, were committed by him in a war, which had been undertaken expressly to punish an adjacent people for having stolen some of his subjects, and sold them for slaves.

He had shown also, last year, that kings were induced to seize and sell their subjects, and individuals each other, in consequence of the existence of the Slave-trade.

He had shown, also, that the administration of justice was perverted, so as to become a fertile source of supply to this inhuman traffic; that every crime was punished by slavery; that false accusations were made, to procure convicts; and that even the judges had a profit on the convictions.

He had shown, again, that many acts of violence were perpetrated by the Europeans themselves. But he would now relate others, which had happened since. The captain of an English vessel, lying in the river Cameroons, sent his boat with three sailors and a slave to get water. A black trader seized the latter, and took him away. He alleged, in his defence, that the captain owed him goods to a greater amount than the value of the slave; and that he would not pay him.

This being told on board, the captain, and a part of his crew, who were compelled to blacken their naked bodies, that they might appear like the natives, went on shore at midnight, armed with muskets and cutlasses. They fired on the trader's dwelling, and killed three of his children on the spot. The trader, being badly wounded, died while they were dragging him to the boat; and his wife being wounded also, died in half an hour after she was on board the ship. Resistance having been made to these violent proceedings, some of the sailors were wounded, and one was killed. Some weeks after this affray, a chieftain of the name of Quarmo went on board the same

vessel to borrow some cutlasses and muskets. He was going, he said, into the country to make war; and the captain should have half of his booty. So well understood were the practices of the trade, that his request was granted. Quar-mo, however, and his associates, finding things favorable to their design, suddenly seized the captain, threw him overboard, hauled him into their canoe, and dragged him to the shore; where another party of the natives, lying in ambush, seized such of the crew as were absent from the ship. But how did these savages behave, when they had these different persons in their power? Did they not instantly retaliate by murdering them all? No; they only obliged the captain to give an order on the vessel to pay his debts. This fact came out only two months ago in a trial in the court of common pleas; not in a trial for piracy and murder, but in the trial of a civil suit, instituted by some of the poor sailors, to whom the owners refused their wages, because the natives, on account of the villanous conduct of their captain, had kept them from their vessel by detaining them as prisoners on shore. This instance, he said, proved the dreadful nature of the Slave-trade, its cruelty, its perfidy, and its effects on the Africans as well as on the Europeans, who carried it on. The cool manner in which the transaction was conducted on both sides, showed that these practices were not novel. It showed also the manner of doing business in the trade. It must be remembered, too, that

these transactions were carrying on at the very time when the inquiry concerning this trade was going forward in parliament, and whilst the witnesses of his opponents were strenuously denying not only the actual, but the possible, existence of any such depredations.

But another instance happened only in August last. Six British ships, the *Thomas*, Captain Philips; the *Wasp*, Captain Hutchinson; the *Recovery*, Captain Kimber, of Bristol; and the *Martha*, Captain Houston; the *Betsey*, Captain Doyle; and the *Amachree*, (he believed,) Captain Lee, of Liverpool, were anchored off the town of Calabar. This place was the scene of a dreadful massacre about twenty years before. The captains of these vessels, thinking that the natives asked too much for their slaves, held a consultation how they should proceed; and agreed to fire upon the town, unless their own terms were complied with. On a certain evening they notified their determination to the traders; and told them, that, if they continued obstinate, they would put it into execution the next morning. In this they kept their word. They brought sixty-six guns to bear upon the town, and fired on it for three hours. Not a shot was returned. A canoe then went off to offer terms of accommodation. The parties, however, not agreeing, the firing recommenced; more damage was done, and the natives were forced into submission. There were no certain accounts of their loss. Report said that fifty were killed, but some were



seen lying badly wounded, and others in the agonies of death, by those who went afterwards on shore.

He would now say a few words relative to the middle passage, principally to show that regulation could not effect a cure of the evil there. Mr. Isaac Wilson had stated in his evidence, that the ship, in which he sailed, only three years ago, was of three hundred and seventy tons, and that she carried six hundred and two slaves. Of these she lost one hundred and fifty-five. There were three or four other vessels in company with her, and which belonged to the same owners. One of these carried four hundred and fifty, and buried two hundred; another carried four hundred and sixty-six, and buried seventy-three; another five hundred and forty-six, and buried one hundred and fifty-eight; and from the four together, after the landing of their cargoes, two hundred and twenty died. He fell in with another vessel, which had lost three hundred and sixty-two; but the number which had been bought was not specified. Now if to these actual deaths, during and immediately after the voyage, we were to add the subsequent loss in the seasoning, and to consider that this would be greater than ordinary in cargoes which were landed in such a sickly state, we should find a mortality, which, if it were only general for a few months, would entirely depopulate the globe.

But he would advert to what Mr. Wilson said, when examined, as a surgeon, as to the causes of

these losses, and particularly on board his own ship, where he had the means of ascertaining them. The substance of his reply was this: That most of the slaves labored under a fixed melancholy, which now and then broke out into lamentations and plaintive songs, expressive of the loss of their relations, friends, and country. So powerfully did this sorrow operate, that many of them attempted in various ways to destroy themselves, and three actually effected it. Others obstinately refused to take sustenance; and when the whip and other violent means were used to compel them to eat, they looked up in the face of the officer, who unwillingly executed this painful task, and said with a smile, in their own language, "Presently we shall be no more." This, their unhappy state of mind, produced a general languor and debility, which were increased in many instances by an unconquerable aversion to food, arising partly from sickness, and partly, to use the language of the slave-captains, from sulkiness. These causes naturally produced the flux. The contagion spread; several were carried off daily; and the disorder, aided by so many powerful auxiliaries, resisted the power of medicine. And it was worth while to remark, that these grievous sufferings were not owing either to want of care on the part of the owners; or to any negligence or harshness of the captain; for Mr. Wilson declared, that his ship was as well fitted out, and the crew and slaves as well treated, as any body could reasonably expect.

He would now go to another ship. That in which Mr. Claxton sailed as a surgeon, afforded a repetition of all the horrid circumstances which had been described. Suicide was attempted, and effected; and the same barbarous expedients were adopted to compel the slaves to continue an existence, which they considered as too painful to be endured. The mortality also was as great. And yet here again the captain was in nowise to blame. But this vessel had sailed since the regulating act. Nay, even in the last year the deaths on shipboard would be found to have been between ten and eleven per cent. on the whole number exported. In truth, the house could not reach the cause of this mortality by all their regulations. Until they could cure a broken heart, until they could legislate for the affections, and bind by their statutes the passions and feelings of the mind, their labor would be in vain.

Such were the evils of the passage. But evils were conspicuous every where, in this trade. Never was there, indeed, a system so replete with wickedness and cruelty. To whatever part of it we turned our eyes, whether to Africa, the middle passage, or the West Indies, we could find no comfort, no satisfaction, no relief. It was the gracious ordinance of Providence, both in the natural and moral world, that good should often arise out of evil. Hurricanes cleared the air; and the propagation of truth was promoted by persecution. Pride, vanity, and profusion contributed often, in their remoter consequences, to the

happiness of mankind. In common, what was in itself evil and vicious, was permitted to carry along with it some circumstances of palliation. The Arab was hospitable; the robber brave. We did not necessarily find cruelty associated with fraud, or meanness with injustice. But here the case was far otherwise. It was the prerogative of this detested traffic to separate from evil its concomitant good, and to reconcile discordant mischiefs. It robbed war of its generosity; it deprived peace of its security: we saw in it the vices of polished society, without its knowledge or its comforts; and the evils of barbarism, without its simplicity. No age, no sex, no rank, no condition was exempt from the fatal influence of this wide-wasting calamity. Thus it attained to the fullest measure of pure, unmixed, unsophisticated wickedness; and, scorning all competition and comparison, it stood without a rival in the secure, undisputed possession of its detestable pre-eminence.

But, after all this, wonderful to relate, this execrable traffic had been defended on the ground of benevolence! It had been said that the slaves were captives and convicts, who, if we were not to carry them away, would be sacrificed, and many of them at the funerals of people of rank, according to the savage custom of Africa. He had shown, however, that our supplies of slaves were obtained from other quarters than these. But he would waive this consideration for the present. Had it not been acknowledged by his opponents, that the custom of ransoming slaves

prevailed in Africa? With respect to human-sacrifices, he did not deny that there might have been some instances of these; but they had not been proved to be more frequent than amongst other barbarous nations; and, where they existed, being acts of religion, they would not be dispensed with for the sake of commercial gain. In fact, they had nothing to do with the Slave-trade; only perhaps, if it were abolished, they might, by means of the civilization which would follow, be done away.

But, exclusively of these sacrifices, it had been asserted that it was kindness to the inhabitants to take them away from their own country. But what said the historians of Africa, long before the question of the abolition was started? "Axim," says Bosman, "is cultivated, and abounds with numerous large and beautiful villages: its inhabitants are industriously employed in trade, fishing, or agriculture." "The inhabitants of Adom always expose large quantities of corn to sale, besides what they want for their own use." "The people of Acron husband their grounds and time so well, that every year produces a plentiful harvest." Speaking of the Fetu country, he says, "Frequently, when walking through it, I have seen it abound with fine well-built and populous towns, agreeably enriched with vast quantities of corn and cattle, palm-wine and oil. The inhabitants all apply themselves, without distinction, to agriculture; some sow corn; others press oil, and draw wine from the palm-trees."

Smith, who was sent out by the Royal African Company in 1726, assures us "that the discerning natives account it their greatest unhappiness that they were ever visited by the Europeans. They say that we, Christians, introduced the traffic of slaves; and that before our coming they lived in peace. But, say they, it is observable, wherever Christianity comes, there come swords and guns and powder and ball with it."

"The Europeans," says Bruce, "are far from desiring to act as peace-makers among them. It would be too contrary to their interests; for the only object of their wars is to carry off slaves; and, as these form the principal part of their traffic, they would be apprehensive of drying up the source of it, were they to encourage the people to live well together."

"The neighborhood of the Damel and Tin keeps them perpetually at war, the benefit of which accrues to the company, who buy all the prisoners made on either side; and the more there are to sell, the greater is their profit; for the only end of their armaments is to make captives, to sell them to the white traders."

Artus, of Dantzic, says that in his time, "those liable to pay fines were banished till the fine was paid; when they returned to their houses and possessions."

Bosman affirms "that formerly all crimes in Africa were compensated by fine or restitution, and, where restitution was impracticable, by corporal punishment."

Moore says, "Since this trade has been used, all punishments have been changed into slavery. There being an advantage in such condemnation, they strain the crimes very hard, in order to get the benefit of selling the criminal. Not only murder, theft, and adultery, are punished by selling the criminal for a slave, but every trifling crime is punished in the same manner."

Loyer affirms that "the king of Sain, on the least pretence, sells his subjects for European goods. He is so tyrannically severe, that he makes a whole village responsible for the fault of one inhabitant; and on the least offence sells them all for slaves."

Such, he said, were the testimonies, not of persons whom he had summoned; not of friends of the abolition, but of men who were themselves, many of them, engaged in the Slave-trade. Other testimonies might be added; but these were sufficient to refute the assertions of his opponents, and to show the kind services we had done to Africa by the introduction of this trade.

He would just touch upon the argument, so often repeated, that other nations would carry on the Slave-trade, if we abandoned it. But how did we know this? Had not Denmark given a noble example to the contrary? She had consented to abolish the trade in ten years; and had she not done this, even though we, after an investigation for nearly five years, had ourselves hung back? But what might not be expected, if we were to take up the cause in earnest; if we

were to proclaim to all nations the injustice of the trade, and to solicit their concurrence in the abolition of it! He hoped the representatives of the nation would not be less just than the people. The latter had stepped forward, and expressed their sense more generally by petitions, than in any instance in which they had ever before interfered. To see this great cause thus triumphing over distinctions and prejudices, was a noble spectacle. Whatever might be said of our political divisions, such a sight had taught us, that there were subjects still beyond the reach of party; that there was a point of elevation, where we ascended above the jarring of the discordant elements which ruffled and agitated the vale below. In our ordinary atmosphere, clouds and vapors obscured the air, and we were the sport of a thousand conflicting winds and adverse currents; but here we moved in a higher region, where all was pure and clear, and free from perturbation and discomposure.

“As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,  
Swells from the vale, and midway leaves the storm;  
Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,  
Eternal sunshine settles on its head.”

Here, then, on this august eminence, he hoped we should build the temple of benevolence; that we should lay its foundation deep in truth and justice; and that we should inscribe upon its gates, “Peace and good-will to men.” Here we should offer the first-fruits of our benevolence,



and endeavor to compensate, if possible, for the injuries we had brought upon our fellow-men.

He would only now observe, that his conviction of the indispensable necessity of immediately abolishing this trade remained as strong as ever. Let those who talked of allowing three or four years to the continuance of it, reflect on the disgraceful scenes which had passed last year. As for himself, he would wash his hands of the blood which would be spilled in this horrible interval. He could not, however, but believe, that the hour was come, when we should put a final period to the existence of this cruel traffic. Should he unhappily be mistaken, he would never desert the cause; but to the last moment of his life he would exert his utmost powers in its support. He would now move, "That it is the opinion of this committee, that the trade carried on by British subjects for the purpose of obtaining slaves on the coast of Africa, ought to be abolished."

Mr. Baillie was in hopes that the friends of the abolition would have been contented with the innocent blood which had been already shed. The great island of St. Domingo had been torn to pieces by insurrections. The most dreadful barbarities had been perpetrated there. In the year 1789 the imports into it exceeded five millions sterling. The exports from it in the same year amounted to six millions; and the trade employed three hundred thousand tons of shipping, and thirty thousand seamen. This fine island, thus advantageously situated had been lost in consequence

of the agitation of the question of the Slave-trade. Surely, so much mischief ought to have satisfied those who supported it; but they required the total destruction of all the West Indian colonies belonging to Great Britain, to complete the ruin.

The honorable gentleman, who had just spoken, had dwelt upon the enormities of the Slave-trade. He was far from denying that many acts of inhumanity might accompany it; but as human nature was much the same every where, it would be unreasonable to expect among African traders, or the inhabitants of our islands, a degree of perfection in morals, which was not to be found in Great Britain itself. Would any man estimate the character of the English nation by what was to be read in the records of the Old Bailey? He himself, however, had lived sixteen years in the West Indies, and he could bear testimony to the general good usage of the slaves.

Before the agitation of this impolitic question, the slaves were contented with their situation. There was a mutual confidence between them and their masters; and this continued to be the case till the new doctrines were broached. But now depots of arms were necessary on every estate; and the scene was totally reversed. Nor was their religious then inferior to their civil state. When the English took possession of Grenada, where his property lay, they found them baptized and instructed in the principles of the Roman Catholic faith. The priests of that persuasion had indeed been indefatigable in their vocation;

so that imported Africans generally obtained within twelve months a tolerable idea of their religious duties. He had seen the slaves there go through the public mass in a manner, and with a fervency, which would have done credit to more civilized societies. But the case was now altered; for, except where the Moravians had been, there was no trace in our islands of an attention to their religious interests.

It had been said, that their punishments were severe. There might be instances of cruelty; but these were not general. Many of them were undoubtedly ill disposed; though not more, according to their number, on a plantation, than in a regiment, or in a ship's crew. Had we never heard of seamen being flogged from ship to ship, or of soldiers dying in the very act of punishment? Had we not also heard, even in this country of boasted liberty, of seamen being seized, and carried away, when returning from distant voyages, after an absence of many years; and this without even being allowed to see their wives and families? As to distressed objects, he maintained that there was more wretchedness and poverty in St. Giles's, than in all the West Indian islands belonging to Great Britain.

He would now speak of the African and West Indian trades. The imports and exports of these amounted to upwards of ten millions annually; and they gave employment to three hundred thousand tons of shipping, and to about twenty-five thousand seamen. These trades had been

sanctioned by our ancestors in parliament. The acts for this purpose might be classed under three heads. First, they were such as declared the colonies and the trade thereof advantageous to Great Britain, and therefore entitled to her protection. Secondly, such as authorized, protected, and encouraged the trade to Africa, as advantageous in itself, and necessary to the welfare and existence of the sugar colonies: and, Thirdly, such as promoted and secured loans of money to the proprietors of the said colonies, either from British subjects or from foreigners. These acts,\* he apprehended, ought to satisfy every person of the legality and usefulness of these trades. They were enacted in reigns distinguished for the production of great and enlightened characters. We heard then of no wild and destructive doctrines like the present. These were reserved for this age of novelty and innovation. But he must remind the house, that the inhabitants of our islands had as good a right to the protection of their property, as the inhabitants of Great Britain. Nor could it be diminished in any shape, without full compensation. The proprietors of lands in the ceded islands, which were purchased of government under specific conditions of settlement, ought to be indemnified. They also (of whom he was one) who had purchased the territory granted by the crown to General Monkton in the island of St. Vincent, ought to be indemnified

\* Here he quoted them specifically.

also. The sale of this had gone on briskly, till it was known that a plan was in agitation for the abolition of the Slave-trade. Since that period, the original purchasers had done little or nothing, and they had many hundred acres on hand, which would be of no value, if the present question was carried. In fact, they had a right to compensation. The planters generally spent their estates in this country. They generally educated their children in it. They had never been found seditious or rebellious; and they demanded of the parliament of Great Britain that protection, which, upon the principles of good faith, it was in duty bound to afford them, in common with the rest of his majesty's loyal subjects.

Mr. Vaughan stated that, being a West Indian by birth, and connected with the islands, he could speak from his own knowledge. In the early part of his life he was strongly in favor of the abolition of the Slave-trade. He had been educated by Dr. Priestley and the father of Mrs. Barbauld; who were both of them friends to that question. Their sentiments he had imbibed: but, although bred at the feet of Gamaliel, he resolved to judge for himself, and he left England for Jamaica.

He found the situation of the slaves much better than he had imagined. Setting aside liberty, they were as well off as the poor in Europe. They had little want of clothes or fuel: they had a house and garden found them; were never imprisoned for debts; nor deterred from marrying, through fear of being unable to support a family;

their orphans and widows were taken care of, as they themselves were when old and disabled; they had medical attendance without expense; they had private property, which no master ever took from them; and they were resigned to their situation, and looked for nothing beyond it. Perhaps persons might have been prejudiced by living in the towns, to which slaves were often sent for punishment, and where there were many small proprietors; or by seeing no negro otherwise than as belonging to the laboring poor; but they appeared to him to want nothing but liberty; and it was only occasionally that they were abused.

There were two prejudices with respect to the colonies, which he would notice. The first was, that cruel usage occasioned the inequality of births and deaths among the slaves. But did cruelty cause the excess of deaths above births in the city of London? No, this excess had other causes. So it had among the slaves. Of these, more males were imported than females: they were dissolute too in their morals; they had also diseases peculiar to themselves. But in those islands where they nearly kept up their numbers, there was this difficulty, that the equality was preserved by the increase on one estate compensating for the decrease on another. These estates, however, would not interchange their numbers; whereas, where freedom prevailed, the free laborers circulated from one employer to another, and appeared wherever they were wanted.

The second was, that all chastisement of the

slaves was cruelty. But this was not true. Their owners generally withdrew them from public justice; so that they, who would have been publicly executed elsewhere, were often kept alive by their masters, and were found punished again and again for repeating their faults. Distributive justice occasioned many punishments; as one slave was to be protected against every other slave: and when one pilfered from another, then the master interfered. These punishments were to be distinguished from such as arose from enforcing labor, or from the cruelty of their owners. Indeed, he had gone over the islands, and he had seen but little ill-usage. He had seen none on the estate where he resided. The whip, the stocks, and confinement, were all the modes of punishment he had observed in other places. Some slaves belonging to his father were peculiarly well off. They saved money, and spent it in their own way.

But, notwithstanding all he had said, he allowed that there was room for improvement; and particularly for instilling into the slaves the principles of religion. When this should be realized, there would be less punishment, more work, more marriages, more issue, and more attachment to masters. Other improvements would be the establishment of medical societies; the introduction of task-work; and grants of premiums and honorary distinctions both to fathers and mothers, according to the number of children which they should rear. Besides this, negro evidence should

be allowed in the courts of law, it being left to the discretion of the court or jury to take or reject it, according to the nature of the case. Cruel masters also should be kept in order in various ways. They should be liable to have their slaves taken from them, and put in trust. Every instrument of punishment should be banished, except the whip. The number of lashes should be limited; and the punishment should not be repeated till after intervals. These and other improvements should be immediately adopted by the planters. The character of the exemplary among them was hurt by being confounded with that of lower and baser men. He concluded by stating, that the owners of slaves were entitled to compensation, if by means of the abolition they should not be able to find laborers for the cultivation of their lands.\*

Mr. Henry Thornton conceived that the two last speakers had not spoken to the point. The first had described the happy state of the slaves in the West Indies. The latter had made similar representations; but yet had allowed that much improvement might be made in their condition. But this had nothing to do with the question then before them. The manner of procuring slaves in Africa was the great evil to be remedied. Africa was to be stripped of its inhab-

\* Mr. Vaughan declared in a future stage of the debate, that he wished to see a prudent termination both of the Slave-trade and of slavery; and that, though he was the eldest son of his father, he never would, on any consideration, become the owner of a slave.



itants, to supply a population for the West Indies. There was a Dutch proverb, which said, "My son, get money, honestly if you can; but get money:" or, in other words, "Get slaves, honestly if you can; but get slaves." This was the real grievance; and the two honorable gentlemen, by confining their observations to the West Indies, had entirely overlooked it.

Though this evil had been fully proved, he could not avoid stating to the house some new facts, which had come to his knowledge as a director of the Sierra Leone Company, and which would still further establish it. The consideration that they had taken place since the discussion of the last year on this subject, obliged him to relate them.

Mr. Falconbridge, agent to the company, sitting one evening in Sierra Leone, heard a shout, and immediately afterwards the report of a gun. Fearing an attack, he armed forty of the settlers, and rushed with them to the place from whence the noise came. He found a poor wretch, who had been crossing from a neighboring village, in the possession of a party of kidnappers, who were tying his hands. Mr. Falconbridge, however, dared not rescue him, lest, in the defenceless state of his own town, retaliation might be made upon him.

At another time, a young woman, living half a mile off, was sold, without any criminal charge, to one of the slave-ships. She was well acquainted with the agent's wife, and had been with her only

the day before. Her cries were heard ; but it was impossible to relieve her.

At another time, a young lad, one of the free settlers who went from England, was caught by a neighboring chief, as he was straggling alone from home, and sold for a slave. The pretext was, that some one in the town of Sierra Leone had committed an offence. Hence the first person belonging to it, who could be seized, was to be punished. Happily the free settlers saw him in his chains ; and they recovered him, before he was conveyed to the ship.

To mark still more forcibly the scenes of misery to which the Slave-trade gave birth, he would mention a case stated to him in a letter by king Naimbanna. It had happened to this respectable person, in no less than three instances, to have some branches of his family kidnapped, and carried off to the West Indies. At one time three young men, Corpro, Banna, and Marbrour, were decoyed on board a Danish slave-ship, under pretence of buying something, and were taken away. At another time, another relation piloted a vessel down the river. He begged to be put on shore, when he came opposite to his own town ; but he was pressed to pilot her to the river's mouth. The captain then pleaded the impracticability of putting him on shore ; carried him to Jamaica ; and sold him for a slave. Fortunately, however, by means of a letter, which was conveyed there, the man, by the assistance of the governor, was sent back to Sierra Leone. At another time,

another relation was also kidnapped. But he had not the good fortune, like the former, to return.

He would mention one other instance. A son had sold his own father, for whom he obtained a considerable price : for, as the father was rich in domestic slaves, it was not doubted that he would offer largely for his ransom. The old man accordingly gave twenty-two of these in exchange for himself. The rest, however, being from that time filled with apprehensions of being on some ground or other sold to the slave-ships, fled to the mountains of Sierra Leone, where they now dragged on a miserable existence. The son himself was sold, in his turn, soon after. In short, the whole of that unhappy peninsula, as he learned from eye-witnesses, had been desolated by the trade in slaves. Towns were seen standing without inhabitants all over the coast ; in several of which the agent of the company had been. There was nothing but distrust among the inhabitants. Every one, if he stirred from home, felt himself obliged to be armed.

Such was the nature of the Slave-trade. It had unfortunately obtained the name of a trade ; and many had been deceived by the appellation. But it was war, and not trade. It was a mass of crimes, and not commerce. It was that which prevented the introduction of a trade in Africa ; for it was only by clearing and cultivating the lands, that the climate could be made healthy for settlements ; but this wicked traffic, by dispersing the inhabitants, and causing the lands to remain uncultivated, made the coast unhealthy to Europeans.

He had found, in attempting to establish a colony there, that it was an obstacle, which opposed itself to him in innumerable ways ; it created more embarrassments than all the natural impediments of the country ; and it was more hard to contend with, than any difficulties of climate, soil, or natural disposition of the people.

He would say a few words relative to the numerous petitions which were then on the table of the house. They had shown, in an extraordinary manner, the opinion of the people. He did not wish to turn this into a constitutional question ; but he would observe, that it was of the utmost consequence to the maintenance of the constitution of this country, that the reputation of parliament should be maintained. But nothing could prejudice its character so much, as a vote, which should lead the people to believe that the legislative body was the more corrupt part of it, and that it was slow to adopt moral principles.

It had been often insinuated that parliament, by interfering in this trade, departed from its proper functions. No idea could be more absurd ; for, was it not its duty to correct abuses ? And what abuses were greater than robbery and murder ? He was indeed anxious for the abolition. He desired it, as a commercial man, on account of the commercial character of the country. He desired it for the reputation of parliament, on which so materially depended the preservation of our happy constitution ; but most of all he prayed for it for the sake of those eternal principles of justice, which it

was the duty of nations, as well as of individuals, to support.

Colonel Tarleton repeated his arguments of the last year. In addition to these, he inveighed bitterly against the abolitionists, as a junto of sectaries, sophists, enthusiasts, and fanatics. He condemned the abolition as useless, unless other nations would take it up. He brought to the recollection of the house the barbarous scenes which had taken place in St. Domingo, all of which, he said, had originated in the discussion of this question. He described the alarms, in which the inhabitants of our own islands were kept, lest similar scenes should occur from the same cause. He ridiculed the petitions on the table. Itinerant clergymen, mendicant physicians, and others, had extorted signatures from the sick, the indigent, and the traveller. School-boys were invited to sign them, under the promise of a holyday. He had letters to produce, which would prove all these things, though he was not authorized to give up the names of those who had written them.

Mr. Montagu said, that, in the last session, he had simply entered his protest against the trade; but now he could be no longer silent; and as there were many, who had conceived regulation to be more desirable than abolition, he would confine himself to that subject.

Regulation, as it related to the manner of procuring slaves, was utterly impossible; for how could we know the case of each individual, whom we forced away into bondage? Could we establish

tribunals all along the coast, and in every ship, to find it out? What judges could we get for such an office? But, if this could not be done upon the coast, how could we ascertain the justness of the captivity of by far the greatest number, who were brought from immense distances inland?

He would not dwell upon the proof of the inefficiency of regulations, as to the middle passage. His honorable friend, Mr. Wilberforce, had shown, that, however the mortality might have been lessened in some ships by the regulations of Sir William Dolben, yet, wherever a contagious disorder broke out, the greatest part of the cargo was swept away. But what regulations by the British parliament could prevent these contagions, or remove them suddenly, when they appeared?

Neither would regulations be effectual, as they related to the protection of the slaves in the West Indies. It might, perhaps, be enacted, as Mr. Vaughan had suggested, that their punishments should be moderate; and that the number of lashes should be limited. But the colonial legislatures had already done as much as the magic of words alone could do, upon this subject; yet the evidence upon the table clearly proved, that the only protection of slaves was in the clemency of their masters. Any barbarity might be exercised with impunity, provided no white person were to see it, though it happened in the sight of a thousand slaves. Besides, by splitting the offence, and inflicting the punishment at intervals, the law could be evaded, although the fact was within the reach

of the evidence of a white man. Of this evasion, Captain Cook, of the eighty-ninth regiment, had given a shocking instance ; and chief justice Otley had candidly confessed, that “he could devise no method of bringing a master, so offending, to justice, while the evidence of the slave continued inadmissible.” But, perhaps, councils of protection, and guardians of the slaves, might be appointed. This again was an expedient which sounded well ; but which would be nugatory and absurd. What person would risk the comfort of his life by the exercise of so invidious an interference ? But supposing that one or two individuals could be found, who would sacrifice all their time, and the friendship of their associates, for the good of the slaves ; what could they effect ? Could they be in all places at once ? But, even if acts of barbarity should be related to them, how were they to come at the proof of them ?

It appeared, then, that no regulations could be effectual until the slaves were admitted to give their evidence ; but to admit them to this privilege, in their present state, would be to endanger the safety and property of their masters. Mr. Vaughan had, however, recommended this measure with limitations, but it would produce nothing but discontent ; for how were the slaves to be persuaded that it was fit they should be admitted to speak the truth, and then be disbelieved and disregarded ? What a fermentation would such a conduct naturally excite in men dismissed with injuries unredressed, though abundantly proved, in their

apprehension, by their testimony! In fact, no regulations would do. There was no cure for these evils, but in the abolition of the Slave-trade. He called upon the planters to concur with his honorable friend, Mr. Wilberforce, in this great measure. He wished them to consider the progress which the opinion of the injustice of this trade was making in the nation at large, as manifested by the petitions; which had almost obstructed the proceedings of the house by their perpetual introduction. It was impossible for them to stifle this great question. As for himself, he would renew his profession of last year, that he would never cease, but with life, to promote so glorious an end.

Mr. Whitbread said, that even if he could conceive that the trade was, as some had asserted it to be, founded on principles of humanity; that the Africans were rescued from death in their own country; that, upon being carried to the West Indies, they were put under kind masters; that their labor there was easy; that at evening they returned cheerful to their homes; that in sickness they were attended with care; and that their old age was rendered comfortable; even then, he would vote for the abolition of the Slave-trade; inasmuch as he was convinced, that that, which was fundamentally wrong, no practice could justify.

No eloquence could persuade him that the Africans were torn from their country and their dearest connexions, merely that they might lead a happier life; or that they could be placed under



the uncontrolled dominion of others, without suffering. Arbitrary power would spoil the hearts of the best. Hence would arise tyranny on the one side, and a sense of injury on the other. Hence the passions would be let loose, and a state of perpetual enmity would follow.

He needed only to go to the accounts of those who defended the system of slavery, to show that it was cruel. He was forcibly struck last year by an expression of an honorable member, an advocate for the trade, who, when he came to speak of the slaves, on selling off the stock of a plantation, said, that they fetched less than the common price, because they were damaged. Damaged! What! were they goods and chattels? What an idea was this to hold out of our fellow-creatures! We might imagine how slaves were treated, if they could be spoken of in such a manner. Perhaps these unhappy people had lingered out the best part of their lives in the service of their master. Able then to do but little, they were sold for little! and the remaining substance of their sinews was to be pressed out by another, yet more hardened than the former, and who had made a calculation of their vitals accordingly.

As another proof, he would mention a passage in a pamphlet, in which the author, describing the happy situation of the slaves, observed that a good negro never wanted a character. A bad one could always be detected by his weals and scars. What was this but to say that there were instruments in use, which left indelible marks be-

hind them ; and who would say that these were used justly ?

An honorable gentleman (Mr. Vaughan) had said that, setting aside slavery, the slaves were better off than the poor in this country. But what was it that we wished to abolish ? Was it not the Slave-trade, which would destroy in time the cruel distinction he had mentioned ? The same honorable gentleman had also expressed his admiration of their resignation ; but might it not be that resignation which was the consequence of despair ?

Colonel Tarleton had insinuated that the petitions on the table had been obtained in an objectionable manner. He had the honor to present one from his constituents ; which, he would venture to say, had originated with themselves ; and that there did not exist more respectable names in the kingdom, than those of the persons who had signed it. He had also asserted that there was a strong similitude in their tenor and substance, as if they had been manufactured by the same persons. This was by no means to be wondered at. There was surely but one plain tale to tell ; and it was not surprising that it had been clothed in nearly the same expressions. There was but one boon to ask, and that was, the abolition of this wicked trade.

It had been said by another, (Mr. Baillie,) that the horrible insurrections in St. Domingo arose from the discussion of the question of the Slave-trade. He denied the assertion, and maintained

that they were the effect of the trade itself. There was a point of endurance, beyond which human nature could not go ; at which the mind of man rose by its native elasticity with a spring and violence proportioned to the degree to which it had been depressed. The calamities in St. Domingo proceeded from the Slave-trade alone ; and, if it were continued, similar evils were to be apprehended in our own islands. The cruelties, which the slaves had perpetrated in that unfortunate colony, they had learned from their masters. Had not an African eyes ? Had he not ears ? Had he not organs, senses, and passions ? If you pricked him, would he not feel the puncture and bleed ? If you poisoned him, would he not die ? and, if you wronged him, would he not revenge ? But he had said sufficient, for he feared he could not better the instruction.

Mr. Milbank would only just observe that the policy of the measure of the abolition was as great as its justice was undeniable. Where slavery existed, every thing was out of its natural place. All improvement was at an end. There must also, from the nature of the human heart, be oppression. He warned the planters against the danger of fresh importations, and invited their concurrence in the measure.

Mr. Dundas (now Lord Melville) declared that he had always been a warm friend to the abolition of the Slave-trade, though he differed with Mr. Wilberforce as to the mode of effecting it.

The abolitionists, and those on the opposite side

of the question, had, both of them, gone into extremes. The former were for the immediate and abrupt annihilation of the trade. The latter considered it as essentially necessary to the existence of the West Indian islands, and therefore laid it down, that it was to be continued for ever. Such was the vast distance between the parties. He would now address himself to each.

He would say first, that he agreed with his honorable friend Mr. Wilberforce in very material points. He believed the trade was not founded in policy; that the continuation of it was not essential to the preservation of our trade with the West Indian islands; and that the slaves were not only to be maintained, but increased there, by natural population. He agreed, too, as to the propriety of the abolition. But when his honorable friend talked of direct and abrupt abolition, he would submit it to him, whether he did not run counter to the prejudices of those who were most deeply interested in the question; and whether, if he could obtain his object without wounding these, it would not be better to do it? Did he not also forget the sacred attention, which parliament had ever shown to the private interests and patrimonial rights of individuals?

Whatever idea men might then have of the African trade, certain it was that those, who had connected themselves with it, had done it under the sanction of parliament. It might also be well worth while to consider (though the conduct of

other nations ought not to deter us from doing our duty) whether British subjects in the West Indies might not be supplied with slaves under neutral flags. Now he believed it was possible to avoid these objections, and at the same time to act in harmony with the prejudices which had been mentioned. This might be done by regulations, by which we should effect the end much more speedily than by the way proposed. By regulations, he meant such as would increase the breed of the slaves in the West Indies; such as would insure a moral education to their children; and such as would even in time extinguish hereditary slavery. The extinction, however, of this was not to be effected by allowing the son of an African slave to obtain his freedom on the death of his parent. Such a son should be considered as born free. He should then be educated at the expense of the person importing his parents; and, when arrived at such a degree of strength as might qualify him to labor, he should work for a term of years for the payment of the expense of his education and maintenance. It was impossible to emancipate the existing slaves at once; nor would such an emancipation be of any immediate benefit to themselves: but this observation would not apply to their descendants, if trained and educated in the manner he had proposed.

He would now address himself to those who adopted the opposite extreme; and he thought he should not assume too much, when he said

that if both slavery and the Slave-trade could be abolished with safety to their property, it deeply concerned their interests to do it.

Such a measure, also, would only be consistent with the principles of the British constitution. It was surely strange that we, who were ourselves free, should carry on a Slave-trade with Africa; and that we should never think of introducing cultivation into the West Indies by free laborers.

That such a measure would tend to their interest, he had no doubt. Did not all of them agree with Mr. Long, that the great danger in the West Indies arose from the importation of the African slaves there? Mr. Long had asserted that all the insurrections there arose from these. If this statement were true, how directly it bore upon the present question! But we were told also, by the same author, that the Slave-trade gave rise to robbery, murder, and all kinds of depredations on the coast of Africa. Had this been answered? No: except, indeed, it had been said that the slaves were such as had been condemned for crimes. Well, then: the imported Africans consisted of all the convicts, rogues, thieves, and vagabonds in Africa. But would the West Indians choose to depend on fresh supplies of these for the cultivation of their lands, and the security of their islands, when it was also found that every insurrection had arisen from them? It was plain the safety of the islands was concerned in this question. There would be danger so long as the trade lasted. The planters were, by these import-

ations, creating the engines of their own destruction. Surely they would act more to their own interest, if they would concur in extinguishing the trade, than by standing up for its continuance.

He would now ask them, what right they had to suppose that Africa would for ever remain in a state of barbarism. If once an enlightened prince were to rise up there, his first act would be to annihilate the Slave-trade. If the light of heaven were ever to descend upon that continent, it would directly occasion its downfall. It was their interest, then, to contrive a mode of supplying labor, without trusting to precarious importations from that quarter. They might rest assured that the trade could not continue. He did not allude to the voice of the people in the petitions then lying on the table of the house; but he knew certainly, that an idea not only of the injustice but of the impolicy of this trade had been long entertained by men of the most enlightened understandings in this country. Was it, then, a prudent thing for them to rest on this commerce for the further improvement of their property?

There was a species of slavery, prevailing only a few years ago, in the collieries in certain boroughs of Scotland. Emancipation there was thought a duty by parliament: but what an opposition there was to the measure! Nothing but ruin would be the consequence of it! After several years struggle, the bill was carried. Within a year after, the ruin so much talked of vanished in smoke, and there was an end of the business.

It had also been contended that Sir William Dolben's bill would be the ruin of Liverpool: and yet one of its representatives had allowed that this bill had been of benefit to the owners of the slave-vessels there. Was he then asking too much of the West Indians, to request a candid consideration of the real ground of their alarms? He would conclude by stating, that he meant to propose a middle way of proceeding. If there were a number of members in the house, who thought with him, that this trade ought to be ultimately abolished, but yet by moderate measures, which should neither invade the property nor the prejudices of individuals; he wished them to unite, and they might then reduce the question to its proper limits.

Mr. Addington (the speaker) professed himself to be one of those moderate persons called upon by Mr. Dundas. He wished to see some middle measure suggested. The fear of doing injury to the property of others had hitherto prevented him from giving an opinion against the system, the continuance of which he could not countenance.

He utterly abhorred the Slave-trade. A noble and learned lord, who had now retired from the bench, said on a certain occasion, that he pitied the loyalty of that man, who imagined that any epithet could aggravate the crime of treason. So he himself knew of no language which could aggravate the crime of the Slave-trade. It was sufficient for every purpose of crimination, to



assert, that man thereby was bought and sold; or that he was made subject to the despotism of man. But though he thus acknowledged the justice due to a whole continent on the one side, he confessed there were opposing claims of justice on the other. The case of the West Indians deserved a tender consideration also.

He doubted, if we were to relinquish the Slave-trade alone, whether it might not be carried on still more barbarously than at present; and whether, if we were to stop it altogether, the islands could keep up their present stocks. It had been asserted that they could. But he thought that the stopping of the importations could not be depended upon for this purpose, so much as a plan for providing them with more females.

With the mode suggested by his right honorable friend, Mr. Dundas, he was pleased, though he did not wholly agree to it. He could not grant liberty to the children born in the islands. He thought, also, that the trade ought to be permitted for ten or twelve years longer, under such arrangements as should introduce a kind of management among the slaves there, favorable to their interests, and of course to their future happiness. One species of regulation which he should propose, would be greater encouragement to the importation of females than of males, by means of a bounty on the former till their numbers should be found equal. Rewards also might be given to those slaves who should raise a certain

number of children ; and to those who should devise means of lightening negro labor. If the plan of his honorable friend should comprehend these regulations, he would heartily concur in it. He wished to see the Slave-trade abolished. Indeed, it did not deserve the name of a trade. It was not a trade, and ought not to be allowed. He was satisfied, that in a few years it would cease to be the reproach of this nation and the torment of Africa. But under regulations like these, it would cease without any material injury to the interests of others.

Mr. Fox said, that after what had fallen from the two last speakers he could remain no longer silent. Something so mischievous had come out, and something so like a foundation had been laid for preserving, not only for years to come, but for ever, this detestable traffic, that he should feel himself wanting in his duty, if he were not to deprecate all such deceptions and delusions upon the country.

The honorable gentlemen had called themselves moderate men ; but upon this subject he neither felt, nor desired to feel, any thing like a sentiment of moderation. Their speeches had reminded him of a passage in Middleton's Life of Cicero. The translation of it was defective, though it would equally suit his purpose. He says, "To enter into a man's house, and kill him, his wife, and family, in the night, is certainly a most heinous crime, and deserving of death ; but to break open his house, to murder him, his wife, and all his children, in

the night, may be still very right, provided it be done with moderation." Now, was there any thing more absurd in this passage, than to say that the Slave-trade might be carried on with moderation; for, if you could not rob or murder a single man with moderation, with what moderation could you pillage and wound a whole nation? In fact, the question of the abolition was simply a question of justice. It was only whether we should authorize by law, respecting Africa, the commission of crimes for which, in this country, we should forfeit our lives; notwithstanding which, it was to be treated, in the opinion of these honorable gentlemen, with moderation.

Mr. Addington had proposed to cure the disproportion of the sexes in the islands by a bounty on the importation of females; or, in other words, by offering a premium to any crew of ruffians, who would tear them from their native country. He would let loose a banditti against the most weak and defenceless of the sex. He would occasion these to kill fathers, husbands, and brothers, to get possession of their relatives, the females, who, after this carnage, were to be reserved for—slavery. He should like to see the man who would pen such a moderate clause for a British parliament.

Mr. Dundas had proposed to abolish the Slave-trade, by bettering the state of the slaves in the islands, and particularly that of their offspring. His plan, with respect to the latter, was not a little curious. They were to become free, when born; and then they were to be educated at the expense

of those to whom their fathers belonged. But it was clear, that they could not be educated for nothing. In order, therefore, to repay this expense, they were to be slaves for ten or fifteen years. In short, they were to have an education, which was to qualify them to become freemen; and, after they had been so educated, they were to become slaves. But as this free education might possibly unfit them for submitting to slavery; so, after they had been made to bow under the yoke for ten or fifteen years, they might then, perhaps, be equally unfit to become free; and, therefore, might be retained as slaves for a few years longer, if not for their whole lives. He never heard of a scheme so moderate, and yet so absurd and visionary.

The same honorable gentleman had observed, that the conduct of other nations should not hinder us from doing our duty; but yet, neutrals would furnish our islands with slaves. What was the inference from this moderate assertion, but that we might as well supply them ourselves? He hoped, if we were yet to be supplied, it would never be by Englishmen. We ought no longer to be concerned in such a crime.

An adversary, Mr. Baillie, had said, that it would not be fair to take the character of this country from the records of the Old Bailey. He did not at all wonder, when the subject of the Slave-trade was mentioned, that the Old Bailey naturally occurred to his recollection. The facts which had been described in the evidence were

associated in all our minds with the ideas of criminal justice. But Mr. Baillie had forgot the essential difference between the two cases. When we learned from these records that crimes were committed in this country, we learned also that they were punished with transportation and death. But the crimes committed in the Slave-trade were passed over with impunity. Nay, the perpetrators were even sent out again to commit others.

As to the mode of obtaining slaves, it had been suggested, as the least disreputable, that they became so in consequence of condemnation as criminals. But he would judge of the probability of this mode by the reasonableness of it. No less than eighty thousand Africans were exported annually by the different nations of Europe from their own country. Was it possible to believe that this number could have been legally convicted of crimes, for which they had justly forfeited their liberty? The supposition was ridiculous. The truth was, that every enormity was practised to obtain the persons of these unhappy people. He referred those present to the case in the evidence of the African trader, who had kidnapped and sold a girl, and who was afterwards kidnapped and sold himself. He desired them to reason upon the conversation which had taken place between the trader and the captain of the ship on this occasion. He desired them also to reason upon the instance mentioned this evening, which had happened in the river Cameroons, and they would infer all the rapine, all the desolation, and

all the bloodshed, which had been placed to the account of this execrable trade.

An attempt had been made to impress the house with the horrible scenes which had taken place in St. Domingo, as an argument against the abolition of the Slave-trade ; but could any more weighty argument be produced in its favor ? What were the causes of the insurrections there ? They were two. The first was the indecision of the national assembly, who wished to compromise between that which was right and that which was wrong on this subject. And the second was the oppression of the people of color, and of the slaves. In the first of the causes, we saw something like the moderation of Mr. Dundas and Mr. Addington. One day this assembly talked of liberty, and favored the blacks. Another day they suspended their measures, and favored the whites. They wished to steer a middle course ; but decision had been mercy. Decision even against the planters would have been a thousand times better than indecision and half measures. In the mean time, the people of color took the great work of justice into their own hands. Unable, however, to complete this of themselves, they called in the aid of the slaves. Here began the second cause ; for the slaves, feeling their own power, began to retaliate on the whites. And here it may be observed, that, in all revolutions, the clemency or cruelty of the victors will always be in proportion to their former privileges or their oppression. That the slaves, then, should have been guilty of

great excesses, was not to be wondered at; for where did they learn their cruelty? They learned it from those who had tyrannized over them. The oppression, which they themselves had suffered, was fresh in their memories, and this had driven them to exercise their vengeance so furiously. If we wished to prevent similar scenes in our own islands, we must reject all moderate measures, and at once abolish the Slave-trade. By doing this, we should procure a better treatment for the slaves there; and when this happy change of system should have taken place, we might depend on them for the defence of the islands as much as on the whites themselves.

Upon the whole, he would give his opinion of this traffic in a few words. He believed it to be impolitic; he knew it to be inhuman; he was certain it was unjust; he thought it so inhuman and unjust, that, if the colonies could not be cultivated without it, they ought not to be cultivated at all. It would be much better for us to be without them, than not to abolish the Slave-trade. He hoped, therefore, that members would this night act the part which would do them honor. He declared, that whether he should vote in a large minority or a small one, he would never give up the cause. Whether in the house of parliament or out of it, in whatever situation he might ever be, as long as he had a voice to speak, this question should never be at rest. Believing the trade to be of the nature of crimes and pollutions which stained the honor of the country, he would never relax his

efforts. It was his duty to prevent man from preying upon man; and if he and his friends should die before they had attained their glorious object, he hoped there would never be wanting men alive to their duty, who would continue to labor till the evil should be wholly done away. If the situation of the Africans was as happy as servitude could make them, he could not consent to the enormous crime of selling man to man; nor permit a practice to continue, which put an entire bar to the civilization of one quarter of the globe. He was sure that the nation would not much longer allow the continuance of enormities which shocked human nature. The West Indians had no right to demand that crimes should be permitted by this country for their advantage; and if they were wise, they would lend their cordial assistance to such measures as would bring about, in the shortest possible time, the abolition of this execrable trade.

Mr. Dundas rose again, but it was only to move an amendment, namely, that the word "gradually" should be inserted before the words "to be abolished" in Mr. Wilberforce's motion.

Mr. Jenkinson (now lord Hawkesbury) said, that the opinions of those who were averse to the abolition had been unfairly stated. They had been described as founded on policy, in opposition to humanity. If it could be made out that humanity would be aided by the abolition, he would be the last person to oppose it. The question was not, he apprehended, whether the



trade was founded in injustice and oppression. He admitted it was: nor was it, whether it was in itself abstractedly an evil; he admitted this also: but whether, under all the circumstances of the case, any considerable advantage would arise to a number of our fellow-creatures from the abolition of the trade in the manner in which it had been proposed.

He was ready to admit, that the Africans at home were made miserable by the Slave-trade, and that, if it were universally abolished, great benefit would arise to them. No one, however, would assert that these miseries arose from the trade as carried on by Great Britain only. Other countries occasioned as much of the evil as we did; and if the abolition of it by us should prove only the transferring of it to those countries, very little benefit would result from the measure.

What, then, was the probability of our example being followed by foreign powers? Five years had now elapsed since the question was first started, and what had any of them done? The Portuguese continued the trade. The Spaniards still gave a bounty to encourage it. He believed there were agents from Holland in this country, who were then negotiating with persons concerned in it in order to secure its continuance. The abolition also had been proposed in the national assembly of France, and had been rejected there. From these circumstances, he had a right to infer, that if we gave up the trade, we should only transfer it to those countries: but this trans-

fer would be entirely against the Africans. The mortality on board English ships, previously to the regulating bill, was four and an eighth per cent. Since that time it had been reduced to little more than three per cent.\* In French ships it was near ten, and in Dutch ships from five to seven, per cent. In Portuguese it was less than either in French or Dutch, but more than in English ships since the regulating bill. Thus the deaths of the Africans would be more than doubled, if we were to abolish the trade.

Perhaps it might be replied, that, the importations being stopped in our own islands, fewer Africans would experience this misery, because fewer would be taken from their own country on this account. But he had a right to infer, that as the planters purchased slaves at present, they would still think it their interest to have them. The question then was, whether they could get them by smuggling. Now it appeared by the evidence, that many hundred slaves had been stolen from time to time from Jamaica, and carried into Cuba. But if persons could smuggle slaves out of our colonies, they could smuggle slaves into them; but particularly when the planters might think it to their interest to assist them.

With respect to the slaves there, instances had

\* Mr. Wilberforce stated it on the same evening to be between ten and eleven per cent. for the last year. The number then exported from Africa to our islands was rather more than 22,000, of whom more than 2,300 died.

been related of their oppression, which shocked the feelings of all who heard them. But was it fair to infer from these their general ill usage? Suppose a person were to make a collection of the different abuses which had happened for a series of years under our own happy constitution, and use these as an argument of its worthlessness; should we not say to him, that in the most perfect system which the human intellect could form, some defects would exist; and that it was unfair to draw inferences from such partial facts? In the same manner he would argue relative to the alleged treatment of the slaves. Evidence had been produced upon this point on both sides. He should not be afraid to oppose the authorities of lord Rodney, and others, against any, however respectable, in favor of the abolition. But this was not necessary. There was another species of facts, which would answer the same end. Previously to the year 1730, the decrease of the slaves in our islands was very considerable. From 1730 to 1755 the deaths were reduced to only two and a half per cent. above the births: from 1755 to 1768 to only one and three-fourths; and from 1768 to 1788 to only one per cent. This, then, on the first view of the subject, would show, that whatever might have been the situation of slaves formerly, it had been gradually improved. But if, in addition to this, we considered the peculiar disadvantages under which they labored; the small proportion of females to males; and the hurricanes and famines which had swept away

thousands, we should find it physically impossible that they could have increased as related, if they had been treated as cruelly as the friends of the abolition had described.

This species of facts would enable him also to draw still more important conclusions; namely, that as the slaves in the West Indies had gradually increased, they would continue to increase; that very few years would pass, not only before the births were equal to the deaths, but before they were more numerous than the deaths; and that if this was likely to happen in the present state of things, how much more would it happen, if by certain regulations the increase of the slaves should be encouraged?

The only question then was, whether it was more advantageous to breed or to import. He thought he should prove the former; and, if so, then this increase was inevitable, and the importations would necessarily cease.

In the first place, the gradual increase of the slaves of late years clearly proved, that such increase had been encouraged. But their price had been doubled in the last twenty years. The planter, therefore, must feel it his interest to desist from purchasing, if possible. But again, the greatest mortality was among the newly imported slaves. The diseases they contracted on the passage, and their deaths in the seasoning, all made for the same doctrine. Add to this, that slaves bred in the islands were more expert at colonial labor, more reconciled to their situation,

and better disposed towards their masters, than those who were brought from Africa.

But it had been said, that the births and deaths in the islands were now equal ; and that therefore no further supply was wanted. He denied the propriety of this inference. The slaves were subject to peculiar diseases. They were exposed also to hurricanes and consequent famines. That the day, however, would come, when the stock there would be sufficient, no person who attended to the former part of his argument could doubt. That they had gradually increased, were gradually increasing, and would, by certain regulations, increase more and more, must be equally obvious. But these were all considerations for continuing the traffic a little longer.

He then desired the house to reflect upon the state of St. Domingo. Had not its calamities been imputed by its own deputies to the advocates for the abolition ? Were ever any scenes of horror equal to those which had passed there ? And should we, when principles of the same sort were lurking in our own islands, expose our fellow-subjects to the same miseries, who, if guilty of promoting this trade, had, at least, been encouraged in it by ourselves ?

That the Slave-trade was an evil, he admitted. That the state of slavery itself was likewise an evil, he admitted ; and if the question was, not whether we should abolish, but whether we should establish these, he would be the first to oppose himself to their existence ; but there were many

evils, which we should have thought it our duty to prevent, yet which, when they had once arisen, it was more dangerous to oppose than to submit to. The duty of a statesman was, not to consider abstractedly what was right or wrong, but to weigh the consequences which were likely to result from the abolition of an evil, against those which were likely to result from its continuance. Agreeing, then, most perfectly with the abolitionists in their end, he differed from them only in the means of accomplishing it. He was desirous of doing that gradually, which he conceived they were doing rashly. He had, therefore, drawn up two propositions. The first was, That an address be presented to his majesty, that he would recommend to the colonial assemblies to grant premiums to such planters, and overseers, as should distinguish themselves by promoting the annual increase of the slaves by birth ; and likewise freedom to every female slave who had reared five children to the age of seven years. The second was, That a bounty of five pounds per head be given to the master of every slave-ship, who should import in any cargo a greater number of females than males, not exceeding the age of twenty-five years. To bring forward these propositions, he would now move that the chairman leave the chair.

Mr. Este wished the debate to be adjourned. He allowed there were many enormities in the trade, which called for regulation. There were two propositions before the house : the one for the immediate, and the other for the gradual, aboli-

tion of the trade. He thought that members should be allowed time to compare their respective merits. At present, his own opinion was, that gradual abolition would answer the end proposed in the least exceptionable manner.

Mr. Pitt rejoiced that the debate had taken a turn, which contracted the question into such narrow limits. The matter then in dispute was merely as to the time at which the abolition should take place. He therefore congratulated the house, the country, and the world, that this great point had been gained; that we might now consider this trade as having received its condemnation; that this curse of mankind was seen in its true light; and that the greatest stigma on our national character, which ever yet existed, was about to be removed! Mankind, he trusted, were now likely to be delivered from the greatest practical evil that ever afflicted the human race; from the most severe and extensive calamity recorded in the history of the world.

His honorable friend (Mr. Jenkinson) had insinuated, that any act for the abolition would be evaded. But if we were to enforce this act with all the powers of the country, how could it fail to be effectual? But his honorable friend had himself satisfied him upon this point. He had acknowledged that the trade would drop of itself, on account of the increasing dearness of the commodity imported. He would ask, then, if we were to leave to the importer no means of importation but by smuggling; and if, besides all the present disad-

vantages, we were to load him with all the charges and hazards of the smuggler, would there be any danger of any considerable supply of fresh slaves being poured into the islands through this channel? The question, under these circumstances, he pronounced, would not bear a dispute.

His honorable friend had also maintained, that it would be inexpedient to stop the importations immediately, because the deaths and births in the islands were as yet not equal. But he (Mr. Pitt) had proved last year, from the most authentic documents, that an increase of the births above the deaths had already taken place. This, then, was the time for beginning the abolition. But he would now observe, that five years had elapsed since these documents were framed; and, therefore, the presumption was, that the black population was increasing at an extraordinary rate. He had not, to be sure, in his consideration of the subject, entered into the dreadful mortality arising from the clearing of new lands. Importations for this purpose were to be considered, not as carrying on the trade, but as setting on foot a Slave-trade: a measure which he believed no one present would then support. He therefore asked his honorable friend, whether the period he had looked to was now arrived? Whether the West Indies, at this hour, were not in a state, in which they could maintain their population?

It had been argued, that one or other of these two assertions was false; that either the population of the slaves must be decreasing, (which the



abolitionists denied,) or, if it was increasing, the slaves must have been well treated. That their population was rather increasing than otherwise, and also that their general treatment was by no means so good as it ought to have been, were both points which had been proved by different witnesses. Neither were they incompatible with each other. But he would see whether the explanation of this seeming contradiction would not refute the argument of expediency, as advanced by his honorable friend. Did the slaves decrease in numbers? Yes. Then ill usage must have been the cause of it; but if so, the abolition was immediately necessary to restrain it. Did they, on the other hand, increase? Yes. But if so, no further importations were wanted. Was their population (to take a middle course) nearly stationary, and their treatment neither so good nor so bad as it might be? Yes. But if so, this was the proper period for stopping further supplies; for both the population and the treatment would be improved by such a measure.

But he would show again the futility of the argument of his honorable friend. He himself had admitted, that it was in the power of the colonists to correct the various abuses, by which the negro population was restrained. But they could not do this without improving the condition of their slaves; without making them approximate towards the rank of citizens; without giving them some little interest in their labor, which would occasion them to work with the energy of men.

But now the assembly of Grenada had themselves stated, "that though the negroes were allowed the afternoons of only one day in every week, they would do as much work in that afternoon, when employed for their own benefit, as in the whole day, when employed in their masters' service."

Now after this confession, the house might burn all his calculations relative to the negro population; for, if it had not yet quite reached the desirable state which he had pointed out, this confession had proved that further supplies were not wanted. A negro, if he worked for himself, could do double work. By an improvement, then, in the mode of labor, the work in the islands could be doubled. But if so, what would become of the argument of his honorable friend? For, then, only half the number of the present laborers were necessary.

He would now try this argument of expediency by other considerations. The best informed writers on the subject had told us, that the purchase of new negroes was injurious to the planters. But if this statement was just, would not the abolition be beneficial to them? That it would, was the opinion of Mr. Long, their own historian. "If the Slave-trade," says he, "were prohibited for four or five years, it would enable them to retrieve their affairs by preventing them from running into debt, either by renting or purchasing negroes." To this acknowledgment he would add a fact from the evidence, which was, that a North American province, by such a prohibition alone for a few

years, from being deeply plunged in debt, had become independent, rich, and flourishing.

The next consideration was the danger to which the islands were exposed from the newly imported slaves. Mr. Long, with a view of preventing insurrections, had advised, that a duty, equal to a prohibition, might be laid on the importation of Coromantine slaves. After noticing one insurrection, which happened through their means, he speaks of another in the following year, in which thirty-three Coromantines, "most of whom had been newly imported, murdered and wounded no less than nineteen whites in the space of an hour." To the authority of Mr. Long he would add the recorded opinion of a committee of the house of assembly of Jamaica, which was appointed to inquire into the best means of preventing future insurrections. The committee reported, that "the rebellion had originated, like most others, with the Coromantines," and they proposed that a bill should be brought in for laying a higher duty on the importation of these particular negroes, which should operate as a prohibition. But the danger was not confined to the introduction of Coromantines. Mr. Long accounts for the frequent insurrections in Jamaica from the greatness of its general importations. "In two years and a half," says he, "twenty-seven thousand negroes have been imported. No wonder that we have rebellions!" Surely, then, when his honorable friend spoke of the calamities of St. Domingo, and of similar dangers, impending over our own islands, it ill

became him to be the person to cry out for further importations ! It ill became him to charge upon the abolitionists the crime of stirring up insurrections, who only recommended what the legislature of Jamaica itself had laid down in a time of danger, with an avowed view to prevent them. It was, indeed, a great satisfaction to himself, that among the many arguments for prohibiting the Slave-trade, the security of our West Indian possessions against internal commotions, as well as foreign enemies, was among the most prominent and forcible. And here he would ask his honorable friend, whether in this part of the argument he did not see reason for immediate abolition. Why should we any longer persist in introducing those latent principles of conflagration, which, if they should once burst forth, might annihilate the industry of a hundred years ? which might throw the planters back a whole century in their profits, in their cultivation, and in their progress towards the emancipation of their slaves ? It was our duty to vote, that the abolition of the Slave-trade should be immediate, and not to leave it to he knew not what future time or contingency.

Having now done with the argument of expediency, he would consider the proposition of his right honorable friend, Mr. Dundas ; that, on account of some patrimonial rights of the West Indians, the prohibition of the Slave-trade would be an invasion of their legal inheritance. He would first observe, that, if this argument was worth any thing, it applied just as much to gradual as to

immediate abolition. He had no doubt that, at whatever period we should say the trade should cease, it would be equally set up; for it would certainly be just as good an argument against the measure in seventy years hence, as it was against it now. It implied, also, that parliament had no right to stop the importations: but had this detestable traffic received such a sanction, as placed it more out of the jurisdiction of the legislature for ever after, than any other branch of our trade? In what a situation did the proposition of his honorable friend place the legislature of Great Britain! It was scarcely possible to lay a duty on any one article, which might not in some way affect the property of individuals. But if the laws respecting the Slave-trade implied a contract for its perpetual continuance, the house could never regulate any other of the branches of our national commerce.

But any contract for the promotion of this trade must, in his opinion, have been void from the beginning: for if it was an outrage upon justice, and only another name for fraud, robbery, and murder, what pledge could devolve upon the legislature to incur the obligation of becoming principals in the commission of such enormities, by sanctioning their continuance?

But he would appeal to the acts themselves. That of 23 George II, c. 31, was the one upon which the greatest stress was laid. How would the house be surprised to hear that the very outrages committed in the prosecution of this trade

had been forbidden by that act ! “ No master of a ship trading to Africa,” says the act, “ shall, by fraud, force, or violence, or by any indirect practice whatever, take on board or carry away from that coast any negro, or native of that country, or commit any violence on the natives, to the prejudice of the said trade ; and every person so offending shall for every such offence forfeit one hundred pounds.” But the whole trade had been demonstrated to be a system of fraud, force, and violence ; and therefore the contract was daily violated, under which the parliament allowed it to continue.

But why had the trade ever been permitted at all ? The preamble of the act would show ; “ Whereas the trade to and from Africa is very advantageous to Great Britain, and necessary for supplying the plantations and colonies thereunto belonging with a sufficient number of negroes at reasonable rates, and for that purpose the said trade should be carried on.” Here then we might see what the parliament had in view, when it passed this act. But no one of the occasions, on which it grounded its proceedings, now existed. He would plead, then, the act itself as an argument for the abolition. If it had been proved that, instead of being very advantageous to Great Britain, it was the most destructive to her interests ; that it was the ruin of her seamen ; that it stopped the extension of her manufactures ; if it had been proved, in the second place, that it was not now necessary for the supply of our planta-

tions with negroes ; if it had been further established that it was from the beginning contrary to the first principles of justice, and consequently that a pledge for its continuance, had one been attempted to be given, must have been absolutely void ; where, in this act of parliament, was the contract to be found, by which Britain was bound, as she was said to be, never to listen to her own true interests and to the cries of the natives of Africa ? Was it not clear that all argument, founded on the supposed pledge of parliament, made against those who employed it ?

But if we were not bound by existing laws to the support of this trade, we were doubly criminal in pursuing it : for why ought it to be abolished at all ? Because it was incurable injustice. Africa was the ground, on which he chiefly rested ; and there it was, that his two honorable friends, one of whom had proposed gradual abolition, and the other regulation, did not carry their principles to their full extent. Both had confessed the trade to be a moral evil. How much stronger, then, was the argument for immediate than for gradual abolition ! If on the ground of a moral evil it was to be abolished at last, why ought it not now ? Why was injustice to be suffered to remain for a single hour ? He knew of no evil which ever had existed, nor could he imagine any to exist, worse than the tearing of eighty thousand persons annually from their native land, by a combination of the most civilized nations, in the most enlightened quarter of the

globe; but more especially by that nation, which called herself the most free and the most happy of them all.

He would now notice the objection, that other nations would not give up the Slave-trade, if we were to renounce it. But if the trade were stained but by a thousandth part of the criminality which he and others, after a thorough investigation of the subject, charged upon it, the house ought immediately to vote its abolition. This miserable argument, if persevered in, would be an eternal bar to the annihilation of the evil. How was it ever to be eradicated, if every nation was thus prudentially to wait till the concurrence of all the world should be obtained? But it applied a thousand times more strongly in a contrary way. How much more justly would other nations say, "Great Britain, free as she is, just and honorable as she is, not only has not abolished, but has refused to abolish, the Slave-trade. She has investigated it well. Her senate has deliberated upon it. It is plain, then, that she sees no guilt in it." With this argument we should furnish the other nations of Europe, if we were again to refuse to put an end to this cruel traffic: and we should have from henceforth not only to answer for our own, but for their crimes also. Already we had suffered one year to pass away; and now, when the question was renewed, not only had this wretched argument been revived, but a proposition had been made for the gradual abolition of the trade. He knew, indeed, the difficulty of reform-



ing long established abuses : but in the present case, by proposing some other period than the present, by prescribing some condition, by waiting for some contingency, perhaps till we obtained the general concurrence of Europe, (a concurrence which, he believed, never yet took place at the commencement of any one improvement in policy or morals,) he feared that this most enormous evil would never be redressed. Was it not folly to wait for the stream to run down before we crossed the bed of its channel ? Alas ! we might wait for ever. The river would still flow on. We should be no nearer the object, which we had in view, so long as the step, which could alone bring us to it, was not taken.

He would now proceed to the civilization of Africa : and as his eye had just glanced upon a West Indian law in the evidence upon the table, he would begin with an argument, which the sight of it had suggested to him. This argument had been ably answered in the course of the evening ; but he would view it in yet another light. It had been said that the savage disposition of the Africans rendered the prospect of their civilization almost hopeless. This argument was indeed of long standing ; but, last year, it had been supported upon a new ground. Captain Frazer had stated in his evidence, that a boy had been put to death at Cabenda, because there were those who refused to purchase him as a slave. This single story was deemed by him, and had been considered by others, as a sufficient

proof of the barbarity of the Africans, and of the inutility of abolishing the Slave-trade. But they, who had used this fact, had suppressed several circumstances relating to it. It appeared, on questioning Captain Frazer afterwards, that this boy had previously run away from his master three several times; that the master had to pay his value, according to the custom of the country, every time he was brought back; and that partly from anger at the boy for running away so frequently, and partly to prevent a repetition of the same expense, he determined to destroy him. Such was the explanation of the signal instance, which was to fix barbarity on all Africa, as it came out in the cross-examination of Captain Frazer. That this African master was unenlightened and barbarous, he freely admitted: but what would an enlightened and civilized West Indian have done in a similar case? He would quote the law, passed in the West Indies in 1722, which he had just cast his eye upon in the book of evidence, by which law this very same crime of running away was by the legislature of an island, by the grave and deliberate sentence of an enlightened legislature, punished with death; and this, not in the case only of the third offence, but even in the very first instance. It was enacted, "That, if any negro or other slave should withdraw himself from his master for the term of six months; or any slave, who was absent, should not return within that time, every such person should suffer death." There was also another

West Indian law; by which every negro was armed against his fellow-negro, for he was authorized to kill every runaway slave; and he had even a reward held out to him for so doing. Let the house now contrast the two cases. Let them ask themselves which of the two exhibited the greater barbarity; and whether they could possibly vote for the continuance of the Slave-trade, upon the principle that the Africans had shown themselves to be a race of incorrigible barbarians?

Something like an opposite argument, but with a like view, had been maintained by others on this subject. It had been said, in justification of the trade, that the Africans had derived some little civilization from their intercourse with us. Yes: we had given them just enough of the forms of justice to enable them to add the pretext of legal trials to their other modes of perpetrating the most atrocious crimes. We had given them just enough of European improvements, to enable them the more effectually to turn Africa into a ravaged wilderness. Alas! alas! we had carried on a trade with them from this civilized and enlightened country, which, instead of diffusing knowledge, had been a check to every laudable pursuit. We had carried a poison into their country, which spread its contagious effects from one end of it to the other, and which penetrated to its very centre, corrupting every part to which it reached. We had there subverted the whole order of nature; we had aggravated every natural barbarity, and furnished to every man motives

for committing, under the name of trade, acts of perpetual hostility and perfidy against his neighbor. Thus had the perversion of British commerce carried misery instead of happiness to one whole quarter of the globe. False to the very principles of trade, misguided in our policy, unmindful of our duty, what almost irreparable mischief had we done to that continent! How should we hope to obtain forgiveness from Heaven, if we refused to use those means, which the mercy of Providence had still reserved to us for wiping away the guilt and shame with which we were now covered? If we refused even this degree of compensation, how aggravated would be our guilt! Should we delay, then, to repair these incalculable injuries? We ought to count the days, nay the very hours, which intervened to delay the accomplishment of such a work.

On this great subject, the civilization of Africa, which, he confessed, was near his heart, he would yet add a few observations. And first, he would say, that the present deplorable state of that country, especially when we reflected that her chief calamities were to be ascribed to us, called for our generous aid, rather than justified any despair, on our part, of her recovery, and still less a repetition of our injuries. On what ground of theory or history did we act, when we supposed that she was never to be reclaimed? There was a time, which it might be now fit to call to remembrance, when human sacrifices, and even this very practice of the Slave-trade, existed in

our own island. Slaves, as we may read in Henry's History of Great Britain, were formerly an established article of our exports. "Great numbers," he says, "were exported, like cattle; from the British coast, and were to be seen exposed for sale in the Roman market." "Adultery, witchcraft, and debt," says the same historian, "were probably some of the chief sources of supplying the Roman market with British slaves; prisoners taken in war were added to the number; there might be also among them some unfortunate gamblers, who, after having lost all their goods, at length staked themselves, their wives, and their children." Now every one of these sources of slavery had been stated to be at this hour a source of slavery in Africa. If these practices, therefore, were to be admitted as proofs of the natural incapacity of its inhabitants, why might they not have been applied to ancient Britain? Why might not then some Roman senator, pointing to British barbarians, have predicted with equal boldness, that these were a people, who were destined never to be free; who were without the understanding necessary for the attainment of useful arts; depressed by the hand of Nature below the level of the human species; and created to form a supply of slaves for the rest of the world? But, happily, since that time, notwithstanding what would then have been the justness of these predictions, we had emerged from barbarism. We were now raised to a situation, which exhibited a striking contrast to every cir-

cumstance by which a Roman might have characterized us, and by which we now characterized Africa. There was indeed one thing wanting to complete the contrast, and to clear us altogether from the imputation of acting even to this hour as barbarians; for we continued to this hour a barbarous traffic in slaves. We continued it even yet, in spite of all our great pretensions. We were once as obscure among the nations of the earth, as savage in our manners, as debased in our morals, as degraded in our understandings, as these unhappy Africans. But in the lapse of a long series of years, by a progression slow, and for a time almost imperceptible, we had become rich in a variety of acquirements. We were favored above measure in the gifts of Providence, we were unrivalled in commerce, pre-eminent in arts, foremost in the pursuits of philosophy and science, and established in all the blessings of civil society: we were in the possession of peace, of liberty, and of happiness: we were under the guidance of a mild and a beneficent religion; and we were protected by impartial laws, and the purest administration of justice: we were living under a system of government, which our own happy experience led us to pronounce the best and wisest, and which had become the admiration of the world. From all these blessings we must for ever have been excluded, had there been any truth in those principles, which some had not hesitated to lay down as applicable to the case of Africa; and we should have been at this mo-

ment little superior, either in morals, knowledge, or refinement, to the rude inhabitants of that continent.

If, then, we felt that this perpetual confinement in the fetters of brutal ignorance would have been the greatest calamity which could have befallen us; if we viewed with gratitude the contrast between our present and our former situation; if we shuddered to think of the misery, which would still have overwhelmed us, had our country continued to the present times, through some cruel policy, to be the mart for slaves to the more civilized nations of the world; God forbid that we should any longer subject Africa to the same dreadful scourge, and exclude the sight of knowledge from her coasts, which had reached every other quarter of the globe!

He trusted we should no longer continue this commerce; and that we should no longer consider ourselves as conferring too great a boon on the natives of Africa in restoring them to the rank of human beings. He trusted we should not think ourselves too liberal, if, by abolishing the Slave-trade, we gave them the same common chance of civilization with other parts of the world. If we listened to the voice of reason and duty this night, some of us might live to see a reverse of that picture, from which we now turned our eyes with shame. We might live to behold the natives engaged in the calm occupations of industry, and in the pursuit of a just commerce. We might behold the beams of science and philosophy break-

ing in upon their land, which at some happy period in still later times might blaze with full lustre ; and, joining their influence to that of pure religion, might illuminate and invigorate the most distant extremities of that immense continent. Then might we hope, that even Africa (though last of all the quarters of the globe) should enjoy at length, in the evening of her days, those blessings, which had descended so plentifully upon us in a much earlier period of the world. Then also would Europe, participating in her improvement and prosperity, receive an ample recompense for the tardy kindness (if kindness it could be called) of no longer hindering her from extricating herself out of the darkness, which, in other more fortunate regions, had been so much more speedily dispelled.

—Nos primus equis Oriens afflavit anhelis ;  
Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.

Then might be applied to Africa those words, originally used indeed with a different view :

His demùm exactis———  
Devenere locos lætos, et amœna vireta  
Fortunatorum nemorum, sedesque beatas ;  
Largior hic campos æther et lumine vestit  
Purpureo :

It was in this view—it was as an atonement for our long and cruel injustice towards Africa, that the measure proposed by his honorable friend, Mr. Wilberforce, most forcibly recommended itself to his mind. The great and happy change to be expected in the state of her inhabitants was, of



all the various benefits of the abolition, in his estimation, the most extensive and important. He should vote against the adjournment; and he should also oppose every proposition, which tended either to prevent, or even to postpone for an hour, the total abolition of the Slave-trade.

Mr. Pitt having concluded his speech, (at about six in the morning,) Sir William Dolben, the chairman, proposed the following questions. The first was on the motion of Mr. Jenkinson, "that the chairman do now leave the chair." This was lost by a majority of two hundred and thirty-four to eighty-seven. The second was on the motion of Mr. Dundas, "that the abolition should be gradual;" when the votes for gradual exceeded those for immediate by one hundred and ninety-three to one hundred and twenty-five. He then put the amended question, that "it was the opinion of the committee, that the trade ought to be gradually abolished." The committee having divided again, the votes for a gradual abolition were two hundred and thirty, and those against any abolition were eighty-five.

After this debate, the committee for the abolition of the Slave-trade held a meeting. They voted their thanks to Mr. Wilberforce for his motion, and to Mr. Pitt, Mr. Fox, and those other members of the house, who had supported it. They resolved, also, that the house of commons, having determined that the Slave-trade ought to be gradually abolished, had by that decision manifested their opinion that it was cruel

and unjust. They resolved, also, that a gradual abolition of it was not an adequate remedy for its injustice and cruelty; neither could it be deemed a compliance with the general wishes of the people, as expressed in their numerous and urgent petitions to parliament. And they resolved, lastly, that the interval, in which the Slave-trade should be permitted to continue, afforded a prospect of redoubled cruelties and ravages on the coast of Africa; and that it imposed therefore an additional obligation on every friend to the cause, to use all constitutional means to obtain its immediate abolition.

At a subsequent meeting they voted their thanks to the right honorable lord Muncaster, for the able support he had given to the great object of their institution by his *Historical Sketches of the Slave-trade, and of its effects in Africa, addressed to the people of Great Britain*; and they elected the reverend Richard Gifford and the reverend Thomas Gisborne honorary and corresponding members; the first on account of his excellent sermon before mentioned and other services, and the latter on account of his truly Christian and seasonable pamphlet, entitled *Remarks on the late Decision of the House of Commons respecting the Abolition of the Slave-trade*.

On the twenty-third of April, the house of commons resolved itself into a committee of the whole house, to consider the subject again; and Mr. Beaufoy was put into the chair.

Mr. Dundas, upon whom the task of introdu-

cing a bill for the gradual abolition of the Slave-trade now devolved, rose to offer the outlines of a plan for that purpose. He intended, he said, immediately to abolish that part of the trade, by which we supplied foreigners with slaves. The other part of it was to be continued seven years from the first of January next. He grounded the necessity of its continuance till this time upon the documents of the negro population in the different islands. In many of these, slaves were imported, but they were re-exported nearly in equal numbers. Now all these he considered to be in a state to go on without future supplies from Africa. Jamaica and the ceded islands retained almost all the slaves imported into them. This he considered as a proof that these had not attained the same desirable state; and it was therefore necessary that the trade should be continued longer on this account. It was his intention, however, to provide proper punishments, while it lasted, for abuses both in Africa and the middle passage. He would take care, as far as he could, that none but young slaves should be brought from the coast of Africa. He would encourage establishments there for a new species of traffic. Foreign nations should be invited to concur in the abolition. He should propose a predial rather than a personal service for the West Indies, and institutions by which the slaves there should be instructed in religious duties. He concluded by reading several resolutions, which he would leave to the future consideration of the house.

Mr. Pitt then rose. He deprecated the resolutions altogether. He denied also the inferences, which Mr. Dundas had drawn from the West Indian documents relative to the negro population. He had looked over his own calculations from the same documents again and again, and he would submit them, with all their data, if it should be necessary, to the house.

Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Fox held the same language. They contended, also, that Mr. Dundas had now proved, a thousand times more strongly than ever, the necessity of immediate abolition. All the resolutions he had read were operative against his own reasoning. The latter observed, that the slave-traders were in future only to be allowed to steal innocent children from their disconsolate parents.

After a few observations by lord Sheffield, Mr. Drake, Colonel Tarleton, and Mr. Rolle, the house adjourned.

On the twenty-fifth of April it resumed the consideration of the subject. Mr. Dundas then went over his former resolutions, and concluded by moving, "that it should not be lawful to import any African negroes into any British colonies, in ships owned or navigated by British subjects, at any time after the first of January, 1800."

Lord Mornington (now marquis Wellesley) rose to propose an amendment. He congratulated his countrymen that the Slave-trade had received its death-wound. This traffic was founded in injustice; and between right and wrong there could

be no compromise. Africa was not to be sacrificed to the apparent good of the West Indies. He would not repeat those enormities out of the evidence, which had made such a deep impression upon the house. It had been resolved that the trade should be abolished. The question then was, how long they were to persevere in the crime of its continuance. One had said that they might be unjust for ten years longer; another, only till the beginning of the next century. But this diversity of opinion had proceeded from an erroneous statement of Mr. Dundas against the clear and irrefragable calculations of Mr. Pitt. The former had argued that, because Jamaica and the ceded islands had retained almost all the slaves which had been imported into them, they were, therefore, not yet in a situation to support their population without further supplies from Africa. But the truth was, that the slaves so retained were kept, not to maintain the population there, but to clear new land. Now the house had determined, that the trade was not to be continued for this purpose. The population, therefore, in the islands was sufficient to continue the ordinary cultivation of them.

He deprecated the idea that the Slave-trade had been so sanctioned by the acts of former parliaments, that the present could make no alteration in it. Had not the house altered the import of foreign sugar into our islands? a measure, which at the time affected the property of many. Had they not prohibited the exports of provisions

from America to the same quarter? Again, as to compacts, had the Africans ever been parties to these? It was rather curious, also, when King James the Second gave a charter to the slave-traders, that he should have given them a right to all the south of Africa, and authority over every person born therein! But, by doing this, it was clear that he gave them a right which he never possessed himself. After many other observations, he concluded by moving, "that the year 1793 be substituted in the place of the year 1800."

In the course of the debate which followed, Mr. Burdon stated his conviction of the necessity of immediate abolition; but he would support the amendment, as the shortest of the terms proposed.

Mr. Robert Thornton would support it also, as the only choice left him. He dared not accede to a motion, by which we were to continue for seven years to imbrue our hands in innocent blood.

Mr. Ryder would not support the trade for one moment if he could avoid it. He could not hold a balance with gold in one scale, and blood in the other.

Mr. William Smith exposed the wickedness of restricting the trade to certain ages. The original motion, he said, would only operate as a transfer of cruelty from the aged and the guilty to the young and the innocent. He entreated the house to consider, whether, if it related to

their own children, any one of them would vote for it.

Mr. Windham had hitherto felt a reluctance to speaking, not from the abstruseness, but from the simplicity of the subject ; but he could not longer be silent, when he observed those arguments of policy creeping again out of their lurking-places, which had fled before eloquence and truth. The house had clearly given up the policy of the question. They had been determined by the justice of it. Why were they then to be troubled again with arguments of this nature ? These, if admitted, would go to the subversion of all public as well as private morality. Nations were as much bound as individuals to a system of morals, though a breach in the former could not be so easily punished. In private life, morality took pretty good care of itself. It was a kind of retail article, in which the returns were speedy. If a man broke open his neighbor's house, he would feel the consequences. There was an ally of virtue, who rendered it the interest of individuals to be moral, and he was called the executioner. But as such punishment did not always await us in our national concerns, we should substitute honor as the guardian of our national conduct. He hoped the West Indians would consider the character of the mother-country, and the obligations to national as well as individual justice. He hoped also they would consider the sufferings which they occasioned in Africa, in the passage, and in the West Indies. In the passage,

indeed, no one was capable of describing them. The section of the slave-ship, however, made up the deficiency of language, and did away all necessity of argument, on this subject. Disease there had to struggle with the new affliction of chains and punishment. At one view were the irksomeness of a jail, and the miseries of an hospital; so that the holds of these vessels put him in mind of the regions of the damned. The trade, he said, ought immediately to be abolished. On a comparison of the probable consequences of the abolition of it, he saw on one side only doubtful contingencies, but on the other shame and disgrace.

Sir James Johnstone contended for the immediate abolition of the trade. He had introduced the plough into his own plantation in the West Indies, and he found the land produced more sugar than when cultivated in the ordinary way by slaves. Even for the sake of the planters, he hoped the abolition would not be long delayed.

Mr. Dundas replied: after which, a division took place. The number of votes in favor of the original motion was one hundred and fifty-eight, and for the amendment one hundred and nine.

On the 27th of April, the house resumed the subject. Mr. Dundas moved, as before, that the Slave-trade should cease in the year 1800; upon which lord Mornington moved, that the year 1795 should be substituted for the latter period.

In the course of the debate which followed, Mr. Hubbard said that he had voted against the



abolition, when the year 1793 was proposed ; but he thought that, if it were not to take place till 1795, sufficient time would be allowed the planters. He would support this amendment ; and he congratulated the house on the prospect of the final triumph of truth, humanity, and justice.

Mr. Addington preferred the year 1796 to the year 1795.

Mr. Alderman Watson considered the abolition in 1796 to be as destructive as if it were immediate.

A division having taken place, the number of votes in favor of the original motion was one hundred and sixty-one, and in favor of lord Mornington's amendment for the year 1795, one hundred and twenty-one. Sir Edward Knatchbull, however, seeing that there was a disposition in the house to bring the matter to a conclusion, and that a middle line would be preferred, moved that the year 1796 should be substituted for the year 1800. Upon this the house divided again ; when there appeared for the original motion only one hundred and thirty-two, but for the amendment one hundred and fifty-one.

The gradual abolition having been now finally agreed upon for the year 1796, a committee was named, which carried the resolution to the lords.

On the eighth of May, the lords were summoned to consider it. Lord Stormont, after having spoken for some time, moved that they should hear evidence upon it. Lord Grenville opposed the motion, on account of the delay which would

arise from an examination of the witnesses by the house at large : but he moved that such witnesses should be examined by a committee of the house. Upon this a debate ensued, and afterwards a division ; when the original motion was carried by sixty-three against thirty-six.

On the 15th of May the lords met again. Evidence was then ordered to be summoned in behalf of those interested in the continuance of the trade. At length it was introduced ; but on the fifth of June, when only seven persons had been examined, a motion was made, and carried, that the further examination should be postponed to the next session.

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### CHAPTER III.

CONTINUATION FROM JULY, 1792, TO JULY, 1793—AUTHOR TRAVELS ROUND THE KINGDOM AGAIN—MOTION TO RENEW THE RESOLUTION OF THE LAST YEAR IN THE COMMONS—MOTION LOST—NEW MOTION IN THE COMMONS TO ABOLISH THE FOREIGN SLAVE-TRADE—MOTION LOST—PROCEEDINGS OF THE LORDS.

THE resolution adopted by the commons, that the trade should cease in 1796, was a matter of great joy to many ; and several, in consequence of it, returned to the use of sugar. The committee, however, for the abolition did not view it in the same favorable light. They considered it as a political manœuvre to frustrate the accomplishment of the object. But the circumstance which

gave them the most concern, was the resolution of the lords to hear evidence. It was impossible now to say when the trade would cease. The witnesses in behalf of the merchants and planters had obtained possession of the ground; and they might keep it, if they chose, even till the year 1800, to throw light upon a measure which was to be adopted in 1796. The committee found, too, that they had again the laborious task before them of finding out new persons to give testimony in behalf of their cause; for some of their former witnesses were dead, and others were out of the kingdom; and unless they replaced these, there would be no probability of making out that strong case in the lords, which they had established in the commons. It devolved, therefore, upon me once more to travel for this purpose; but as I was then in too weak a state to bear as much fatigue as formerly, Dr. Dickson relieved me, by taking one part of the tour, namely, that to Scotland, upon himself.

These journeys we performed with considerable success; during which, the committee elected Mr. Joseph Townsend, of Baltimore, in Maryland, an honorary and corresponding member.

Parliament having met, Mr. Wilberforce, in February, 1793, moved that the house resolve itself into a committee of the whole house on Thursday next, to consider of the circumstances of the Slave-trade. This motion was opposed by Sir William Yonge, who moved that this day six months should be substituted for Thursday next.

A debate ensued ; of this, however, as well as of several which followed, I shall give no account ; as it would be tedious to the reader to hear a repetition of the same arguments. Suffice it to say, that the motion was lost by a majority of sixty-one to fifty-three.

This sudden refusal of the house of commons to renew their own vote of the former year gave great uneasiness to the friends of the cause. Mr. Wilberforce, however, resolved that the session should not pass without an attempt to promote it in another form ; and accordingly on the fourteenth of May he moved for leave to bring in a bill to abolish that part of the Slave-trade, by which the British merchants supplied foreigners with slaves. This motion was opposed like the former ; but was carried by a majority of seven. The bill was then brought in ; and it passed its first and second reading with little opposition ; but on the fifth of June, notwithstanding the eloquence of Mr. Pitt and of Mr. Fox, and the very able speeches of Mr. Francis, Mr. Courtenay, and others, it was lost by a majority of thirty-one to twenty-nine.

In the interval between these motions the question experienced in the lords considerable opposition. The duke of Clarence moved that the house should not proceed in the consideration of the Slave-trade till after the Easter recess. The earl of Abingdon was still more hostile afterwards. He deprecated the new philosophy. It was as full of mischief as the box of Pandora. The doc-

trine of the abolition of the Slave-trade was a species of it; and he concluded by moving, that all further consideration of the subject be postponed. To the epithet then bestowed upon the abolitionists by this nobleman, the duke of Clarence added those of fanatics and hypocrites, among whom he included Mr. Wilberforce by name. All the other lords, however, who were present, manifested such a dislike to the sentiments of the earl of Abingdon, that he withdrew his motion.

After this, the hearing of evidence on the resolution of the house of commons was resumed; and seven persons were examined before the close of the session.

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## CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUATION FROM JULY, 1793, TO JULY, 1794—AUTHOR TRAVELS ROUND THE KINGDOM AGAIN—MOTION TO ABOLISH THE FOREIGN SLAVE-TRADE RENEWED IN THE COMMONS—AND CARRIED—BUT LOST IN THE LORDS—FURTHER PROCEEDINGS THERE—AUTHOR, ON ACCOUNT OF HIS DECLINING HEALTH, OBLIGED TO RETIRE FROM THE CAUSE.

THE committee for the abolition could not view the proceedings of both houses of parliament on this subject during the year 1793, without being alarmed for the fate of their question. The only two sources of hope, which they could discover, were in the disposition then manifested by the peers as to the conduct of the earl of Abingdon; and in their determination to proceed in the hearing of evidence. The latter circumstance, indeed,

was the more favorable, as the resolution, upon which the witnesses were to be examined, had not been renewed by the commons. These considerations, however, afforded no solid ground for the mind to rest upon. They only broke in upon it, like faint gleams of sunshine, for a moment, and then were gone. In this situation, the committee could only console themselves by the reflection, that they had done their duty. In looking, however, to their future services, one thing, and only one, seemed practicable ; and this was necessary ; namely, to complete the new body of evidence, which they had endeavored to form in the preceding year. The determination to do this rendered another journey on my part indispensable ; and I undertook it, broken down as my constitution then was, beginning it in September, 1793, and completing it in February, 1794.

Mr. Wilberforce, in this interval, had digested his plan of operations ; and accordingly, early in the session of 1794, he asked leave to renew his former bill, to abolish that part of the trade, by means of which British merchants supplied foreigners with slaves. This request was opposed by Sir William Yonge ; but it was granted, on a division of the house, by a majority of sixty-three to forty votes.

When the bill was brought in, it was opposed by the same member ; upon which the house divided ; and there appeared for Sir William Yonge's amendment thirty-eight votes, but against it fifty-six.

On a motion for the recommitment of the bill, lord Sheffield divided the house, against whose motion there was a majority of forty-two. And on the third reading of it, it was opposed again; but it was at length carried.

The speakers against the bill were: Sir William Yonge, Lord Sheffield, Colonel Tarleton, Alderman Newnham, and Mr. Payne, Est, Lechmere, Cawthorne, Jenkinson, and Dent. Those who spoke in favor of it were: Mr. Pitt, Fox, William Smith, Whitbread, Francis, Burdon, Vaughan, Barham, and Serjeants Watson and Adair.

While the foreign Slave-bill was thus passing its stages in the commons, Dr. Horseley, bishop of Rochester, who saw no end to the examinations, while the witnesses were to be examined at the bar of the house of lords, moved, that they should be taken in future before a committee above-stairs. Dr. Porteus, bishop of London, and the lords Guildford, Stanhope, and Grenville, supported this motion. But the lord chancellor Thurlow, aided by the duke of Clarence, and by the lords Mansfield, Hay, Abingdon, and others, negatived it by a majority of twenty-eight.

At length the bill itself was ushered into the house of lords. On reading it a second time, it was opposed by the duke of Clarence, lord Abingdon, and others. Lord Grenville and the bishop of Rochester declined supporting it. They alleged, as a reason, that they conceived the introduction of it to have been improper pending the inquiry on the general subject of the Slave-trade,

This declaration brought up the lords Stanhope and Lauderdale, who charged them with inconsistency as professed friends of the cause. At length the bill was lost. During these discussions, the examination of the witnesses was resumed by the lords; but only two of them were heard in this session.\*

After this decision the question was in a desperate state; for if the commons would not renew their own resolution, and the lords would not abolish the foreign part of the Slave-trade, what hope was there of success? It was obvious, too, that in the former house, Mr. Pitt and Mr. Dundas voted against each other. In the latter, the lord chancellor Thurlow opposed every motion in favor of the cause. The committee therefore were reduced to this: either they must exert themselves without hope, or they must wait till some change should take place in their favor. As far as I myself was concerned, all exertion was then over. The nervous system was almost shattered to pieces. Both my memory and my hearing failed me. Sudden dizziness seized my head. A confused singing in the ears followed me, wherever I went. On going to bed, the very stairs seemed to dance up and down under me, so that, misplacing my foot, I sometimes fell. Talking too, if it continued but half an hour, exhausted me, so that profuse perspirations followed; and the same effect was produced even

\* After this, the examinations wholly dropped in the house of lords.



by an active exertion of the mind for the like time. These disorders had been brought on by degrees in consequence of the severe labors necessarily attached to the promotion of the cause. For seven years I had a correspondence to maintain with four hundred persons with my own hand. I had some book or other annually to write in behalf of the cause. In this time I had travelled more than thirty-five thousand miles in search of evidence, and a great part of these journeys in the night. All this time my mind had been on the stretch. It had been bent, too, to this one subject; for I had not even leisure to attend to my own concerns. The various instances of barbarity, which had come successively to my knowledge within this period, had vexed, harassed, and afflicted it. The wound, which these had produced, was rendered still deeper by those cruel disappointments before related, which arose from the reiterated refusal of persons to give their testimony, after I had travelled hundreds of miles in quest of them. But the severest stroke was that inflicted by the persecution, begun and pursued by persons interested in the continuance of the trade, of such witnesses as had been examined against them; and whom, on account of their dependant situation in life, it was most easy to oppress. As I had been the means of bringing these forward on these occasions, they naturally came to me, when thus persecuted, as the author of their miseries and their ruin. From their supplications and wants, it would have been un-

generous and ungrateful to have fled.\* These different circumstances, by acting together, had at length brought me into the situation just mentioned; and I was therefore obliged, though very reluctantly, to be borne out of the field, where I had placed the great honor and glory of my life.

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## CHAPTER V.

CONTINUATION FROM JULY, 1794, TO JULY, 1799—VARIOUS MOTIONS WITHIN THIS PERIOD.

I PURPOSE, though it may seem abrupt, after the division which has hitherto been made of the contents of this volume, to throw the events of the next five years into one chapter.

Mr. Wilberforce and the members of the committee, whose constitutions had not suffered like my own, were still left; and they determined to persevere in the promotion of their great object as long as their health and their faculties permitted them. The former, accordingly, in the month of

\* The late Mr. Whitbread, to whom one day in deep affliction on this account I related accidentally a circumstance of this kind, generously undertook, in order to make my mind easy upon the subject, to make good all injuries which should in future arise to individuals from such persecution; and he repaired these at different times, at a considerable expense. I feel it a duty to divulge this circumstance, out of respect to the memory of one of the best of men, and of one, whom, if the history of his life were written, it would appear to have been an extraordinary honor to the country to have produced.

February, 1795, moved in the house of commons for leave to bring in a bill for the abolition of the Slave-trade. This motion was then necessary, if, according to the resolution of that house, the Slave-trade was to cease in 1796. It was opposed, however, by Sir William Yonge, and unfortunately lost by a majority of seventy-eight to fifty-seven.

In the year 1796 Mr. Wilberforce renewed his efforts in the commons. He asked leave to bring in a bill for the abolition of the Slave-trade, but in a limited time. The motion was opposed as before ; but on a division, there were for it ninety-three, and against it only sixty-seven.

The bill, having been brought in, was opposed in its second reading ; but it was carried through it by a majority of sixty-four to thirty-one.

In a future stage it was opposed again ; but it triumphed by a majority of seventy-six to thirty-one. Mr. Elliott was then put into the chair. Several clauses were adopted ; and the first of March, 1797, was fixed for the abolition of the trade : but in the next stage of it, after a long speech from Mr. Dundas, it was lost by a majority of seventy-four against seventy.

Mr. Francis, who had made a brilliant speech in the last debate, considering that nothing effectual had been yet done on this great question, and wishing that a practical beginning might be made, brought forward, soon afterwards, a motion relative to the improvement of the condition of the slaves in the West Indies. This, after a short debate, was negatived without a division. Mr.

William Smith also moved an address to his majesty, that he would be pleased to give directions to lay before the house copies of the several acts relative to regulations in behalf of the slaves, passed by the different colonial assemblies since the year 1788. This motion was adopted by the house. Thus passed away the session of 1796.

In the year 1797, while Mr. Wilberforce was deliberating upon the best measure for the advancement of the cause, Mr. C. Ellis came forward with a new motion. He began by declaring that he agreed with the abolitionists as to their object; but he differed with them as to the mode of attaining it. The Slave-trade he condemned as a cruel and pernicious system; but as it had become an inveterate evil, he feared it could not be done away all at once, without injury to the interests of numerous individuals, and even to the negroes themselves. He concluded by moving an address to his majesty, humbly requesting that he would give directions to the governors of the West Indian islands, to recommend it to the colonial assemblies to adopt such measures as might appear to them best calculated to ameliorate the condition of the negroes, and thereby to remove gradually the Slave-trade; and likewise to assure his majesty of the readiness of this house to concur in any measure to accelerate this desirable object. This motion was seconded by Mr. Baringham. It was opposed, however, by Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Pitt, and others, but was at length carried by a majority of ninety-nine to sixty-three.

In the year 1798, Mr. Wilberforce asked leave to renew his former bill, to abolish the Slave-trade within a limited time. He was supported by Mr. Canning, Mr. Hobhouse, Sir Robert Buxton, Mr. Bouverie, and others. Mr. Sewell, Bryan Edwards, Henniker, and C. Ellis, took the opposite side of the question. Mr. Ellis, however, observed, that he had no objection to restricting the Slave-trade to plantations already begun in the colonies; and Mr. Barham professed himself a friend to the abolition, if it could be accomplished in a reasonable way. On a division, there appeared to be for Mr. Wilberforce's motion eighty-three, but against it eighty-seven.

In the year 1799, Mr. Wilberforce, undismayed by these different disappointments, renewed his motion. Colonel M. Wood, Mr. Petrie, and others, among whom were Mr. Windham and Mr. Dundas, opposed it. Mr. Pitt, Fox, W. Smith, Sir William Dolben, Sir R. Milbank, Mr. Hobhouse, and Mr. Canning, supported it. Sir R. Milbank contended, that modifications of a system fundamentally wrong ought not to be tolerated by the legislature of a free nation. Mr. Hobhouse said, that nothing could be so nefarious as this traffic in blood. It was unjust in its principle. It was cruel in its practice. It admitted of no regulation whatever. The abolition of it was called for equally by morality and sound policy. Mr. Canning exposed the folly of Mr. Dundas, who had said that, as parliament had in the year 1787 left the abolition to the colonial assemblies, it ought

not to be taken out of their hands. This great event, he observed, could only be accomplished in two ways: either by these assemblies, or by the parliament of England. Now the members of the assembly of Jamaica had professed that they would never abolish the trade. Was it not, therefore, idle to rely upon them for the accomplishment of it? He then took a very comprehensive view of the arguments which had been offered in the course of the debate, and was severe upon the planters in the house, who, he said, had brought into familiar use certain expressions, with no other view than to throw a veil over their odious system. Among these was....their right to import laborers. But never was the word "laborers" so prostituted, as when it was used for slaves. Never was the word "right" so prostituted, not even when the Rights of Man were talked of, as when the right to trade in man's blood was asserted by the members of an enlightened assembly. Never was the right of importing these laborers worse defended, than when the antiquity of the Slave-trade, and its foundation on ancient acts of parliament, were brought forward in its support. We had been cautioned not to lay our unhallowed hands on the ancient institution of the Slave-trade; nor to subvert a fabric, raised by the wisdom of our ancestors, and consecrated by a lapse of ages. But on what principles did we usually respect the institutions of antiquity? We respected them when we saw

some shadow of departed worth and usefulness ; or some memorial of what had been creditable to mankind. But was this the case with the Slave-trade ? Had it begun in principles of justice or national honor, which the changes of the world alone had impaired ? Had it to plead former services and glories in behalf of its present disgrace ? In looking at it, we saw nothing but crimes and sufferings from the beginning ; nothing but what wounded and convulsed our feelings ; nothing but what excited indignation and horror. It had not even to plead what could often be said in favor of the most unjustifiable wars. Though conquest had sometimes originated in ambition, and in the worst of motives, yet the conquerors and the conquered were sometimes blended afterwards into one people ; so that a system of common interest arose out of former differences. But where was the analogy of the cases ? Was it only at the outset that we could trace violence and injustice on the part of the Slave-trade ? Were the oppressors and the oppressed so reconciled, that enmities ultimately ceased ? No. Was it reasonable, then, to urge a prescriptive right, not to the fruits of an ancient and forgotten evil, but to a series of new violences ; to a chain of fresh enormities ; to cruelties continually repeated ; and of which every instance inflicted a fresh calamity, and constituted a separate and substantial crime ?

The debate being over, the house divided ;

when it appeared that there were for Mr. Wilberforce's motion seventy-four, but against it eighty-two.

The motion for the general abolition of the Slave-trade having been thus lost again in the commons, a new motion was made there soon after, by Mr. Henry Thornton, on the same subject. The prosecution of this traffic on certain parts of the coast of Africa had become so injurious to the new settlement at Sierra Leone, that not only its commercial prospects were impeded, but its safety endangered. Mr. Thornton, therefore, brought in a bill to confine the Slave-trade within certain limits. But even this bill, though it had for its object only to free a portion of the coast from the ravages of this traffic, was opposed by Mr. Gascoyne, Dent, and others. Petitions also were presented against it. At length, after two divisions, on the first of which there were thirty-two votes to twenty-seven, and on the second thirty-eight to twenty-two, it passed through all its stages.

When it was introduced into the lords, the petitions were renewed against it. Delay also was interposed to its progress by the examination of witnesses. It was not till the fifth of July that the matter was brought to issue. The opponents of the bill at that time were, the duke of Clarence, lord Westmoreland, lord Thurlow, and the lords Douglas and Hay, the two latter being earls of Morton and Kinnoul in Scotland. The supporters of it were lord Grenville, who intro-



duced it, lords Loughborough, Holland, and Dr. Horsley, bishop of Rochester. The latter was peculiarly eloquent. He began his speech by arraigning the injustice and impolicy of the trade: injustice, he said, which no considerations of policy could extenuate; impolicy, equal in degree to its injustice.

He well knew that the advocates for the Slave-trade had endeavored to represent the project for abolition as a branch of jacobinism; but they, who supported it, proceeded upon no visionary motives of equality or of the imprescriptible rights of man. They strenuously upheld the gradations of civil society: but they did, indeed, affirm that these gradations were, both ways, both as they ascended and as they descended, limited. There was an existence of power, to which no good king would aspire; and there was an extreme condition of subjection, to which man could not be degraded without injustice; and this they would maintain was the condition of the African, who was torn away into slavery.

He then explained the limits of that portion of Africa, which the bill intended to set apart as sacred to peace and liberty. He showed that this was but one-third of the coast; and therefore that two-thirds were yet left for the diabolical speculations of the slave-merchants. He expressed his surprise that such witnesses as those against the bill should have been introduced at all. He affirmed that their oaths were falsified by their own log-books; and that from their own

accounts the very healthiest of their vessels were little better than pestilential jails. Mr. Robert Hume, one of these witnesses, had made a certain voyage. He had made it in thirty-three days. He had shipped two hundred and sixty-five slaves, and he had lost twenty-three of them. If he had gone on losing his slaves, all of whom were under twenty-five years of age, at this rate, it was obvious that he would have lost two hundred and fifty-three of them, if his passage had lasted for a year. Now in London only seventeen would have died, of that age, out of one thousand, within the latter period.

After having exposed the other voyages of Mr. Hume in a similar manner, he entered into a commendation of the views of the Sierra Leone Company; and then defended the character of the Africans in their own country, as exhibited in the travels of Mr. Mungo Park. He made a judicious discrimination with respect to slavery, as it existed among them. He showed that this slavery was analogous to that of the heroic and patriarchal ages; and contrasted it with the West Indian in an able manner.

He adverted, lastly, to what had fallen from the learned counsel, who had supported the petitions of the slave-merchants. One of them had put this question to their lordships, "if the Slave-trade were as wicked as it had been represented, why was there no prohibition of it in the holy Scriptures?" He then entered into a full defence of the Scriptures on this ground, which he

concluded by declaring that, as St. Paul had coupled men-stealers with murderers, he had condemned the Slave-trade in one of its most productive modes, and generally in all its modes: and here it was worthy of remark, that the word used by the apostle on this occasion, and which had been translated men-stealers, should have been rendered slave-traders. This was obvious from the Scholiast of Aristophanes, whom he quoted. It was clear, therefore, that the Slave-trade, if murder was forbidden, had been literally forbidden also.

The learned counsel too had admonished their lordships to beware how they adopted the visionary projects of fanatics. He did not know in what direction this shaft was shot; and he cared not. It did not concern him. With the highest reverence for the religion of the land, with the firmest conviction of its truth, and with the deepest sense of the importance of its doctrines, he was proudly conscious that the general shape and fashion of his life bore nothing of the stamp of fanaticism. But he begged leave, in his turn, to address a word of serious exhortation to their lordships. He exhorted them to beware how they were persuaded to bury, under the opprobrious name of fanaticism, the regard which they owed to the great duties of mercy and justice, for the neglect of which (if they should neglect them) they would be answerable at that tribunal, where no prevarication of witnesses could misinform the judge; and where no subtlety of

an advocate, miscalling the names of things, putting evil for good and good for evil, could mislead his judgment.

At length the debate ended: when the bill was lost by a majority of sixty-eight to sixty-one, including personal votes and proxies.

I cannot conclude this chapter without offering a few remarks. And, first, I may observe, as the substance of the debates has not been given for the period which it contains, that Mr. Wilberforce, upon whom too much praise cannot be bestowed for his perseverance from year to year, amidst the disheartening circumstances which attended his efforts, brought every new argument to bear, which either the discovery of new light or the events of the times produced. I may observe also, in justice to the memories of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, that there was no debate within this period, in which they did not take a part; and in which they did not irradiate others from the profusion of their own light: and, thirdly, that in consequence of the efforts of the three, conjoined with those of others, the great cause of the abolition was secretly gaining ground. Many members, who were not connected with the trade, but who had yet hitherto supported it, were on the point of conversion. Though the question had oscillated backwards and forwards, so that an ordinary spectator could have discovered no gleam of hope at these times, nothing is more certain than that the powerful eloquence then displayed had smoothed the resistance to it; had shortened

its vibrations ; and had prepared it for a state of rest.

With respect to the West Indians themselves, some of them began to see through the mists of prejudice, which had covered them. In the year 1794, when the bill for the abolition of the foreign Slave-trade was introduced, Mr. Vaughan and Mr. Barham supported it. They called upon the planters in the house to give way to humanity, where their own interests could not be affected by their submission. This, indeed, may be said to have been no mighty thing ; but it was a frank confession of the injustice of the Slave-trade, and the beginning of the change which followed, both with respect to themselves and others.

With respect to the old friends of the cause, it is with regret I mention, that it lost the support of Mr. Windham within this period ; and this regret is increased by the consideration, that he went off on the avowed plea of expediency against moral rectitude ; a doctrine, which, at least upon this subject, he had reprobated for ten years. It was, however, some consolation, as far as talents were concerned, (for there can be none for the loss of virtuous feeling,) that Mr. Canning, a new member, should have so ably supplied his place.

Of the gradual abolitionists, whom we have always considered as the most dangerous enemies of the cause, Mr. Jenkinson (now lord Hawkesbury) Mr. Addington (now lord Sidmouth) and Mr. Dundas (now lord Melville) continued their opposition during all this time. Of the first two

I shall say nothing at present ; but I cannot pass over the conduct of the latter. He was the first person, as we have seen, to propose the gradual abolition of the Slave-trade ; and he fixed the time for its cessation on the first of January, 1800. His sincerity on this occasion was doubted by Mr. Fox at the very outset ; for he immediately rose and said, that “something so mischievous had come out, something so like a foundation had been laid for preserving, not only for years to come, but for any thing he knew for ever, this detestable traffic, that he felt it his duty immediately to deprecate all such delusions upon the country.” Mr. Pitt, who spoke soon afterwards, in reply to an argument advanced by Mr. Dundas, maintained, that “at whatever period the house should say that the Slave-trade should actually cease, this defence would equally be set up ; for it would be just as good an argument in seventy years hence, as it was against the abolition then.” And these remarks Mr. Dundas verified in a singular manner within this period : for in the year 1796, when his own bill, as amended in the commons, was to take place, he was one of the most strenuous opposers of it ; and in the year 1799, when in point of consistency it devolved upon him to propose it to the house, in order that the trade might cease on the first of January, 1800, (which was the time of his own original choice, or a time unfettered by parliamentary amendment,) he was the chief instrument of throwing out Mr. Wilberforce’s bill, which promised even

a longer period to its continuance : so that it is obvious, that there was no time within his own limits, when the abolition would have suited him, notwithstanding his profession, “that he had always been a warm advocate for the measure.”

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## CHAPTER VI.

CONTINUATION FROM JULY, 1799, TO JULY, 1805—VARIOUS MOTIONS WITHIN THIS PERIOD.

THE question had now been brought forward in almost every possible way, and yet had been eventually lost. The total and immediate abolition had been attempted ; and then the gradual. The gradual again had been tried for the year 1793, then for 1795, and then for 1796, at which period it was decreed, but never allowed to be executed. An abolition of a part of the trade, as it related to the supply of foreigners with slaves, was the next measure proposed ; and when this failed, the abolition of another part of it, as related to the making of a certain portion of the coast of Africa sacred to liberty, was attempted : but this failed also. Mr. Wilberforce therefore thought it prudent not to press the abolition as a mere annual measure, but to allow members time to digest the eloquence which had been bestowed upon it for the last five years, and to wait till some new circumstances should favor its introduction.

Accordingly he allowed the years 1800, 1801, 1802, and 1803 to pass over without any further parliamentary notice than the moving for certain papers; during which he took an opportunity of assuring the house, that he had not grown cool in the cause, but that he would agitate it in a future session.

In the year 1804, which was fixed upon for renewed exertion, the committee for the abolition of the Slave-trade elected James Stephen, Zachary Macaulay, Henry Brougham, esquires, and William Phillips, into their own body. Four other members also, Robert Grant and John Thornton, esquires, and William Manser and William Allen, were afterwards added to the list. Among the reasons for fixing upon this year one may be assigned, namely, that the Irish members, in consequence of the union which had taken place between the two countries, had then all taken their seats in the house of commons; and that most of them were friendly to the cause.

This being the situation of things, Mr Wilberforce, on the thirtieth of March, asked leave to renew his bill for the abolition of the Slave-trade within a limited time. Mr. Fuller opposed the motion. A debate ensued. Colonel Tarleton, Mr. Devaynes, Mr. Addington, and Mr. Manning spoke against it. The latter, however, notwithstanding his connexion with the West Indies, said he would support it, if an indemnification were offered to the planters, in case any actual loss should accompany the measure.



Sir William Geary questioned the propriety of immediate abolition.

Sir Robert Buxton, Mr. Pitt, Fox, and Barham, spoke in favor of the motion.

Mr. William Smith rose, when the latter had seated himself, and complimented him on this change of sentiment, so honorable to him, inasmuch as he had espoused the cause of humanity against his supposed interest as a planter. Mr. Leigh said, that he would not tolerate such a traffic for a moment. All the feelings of nature revolted at it. Lord de Blaquiere observed, "it was the first time the question had been proposed to Irishmen as legislators. He believed it would be supported by most of them. As to the people of Ireland, he could pledge himself, that they were hostile to this barbarous traffic." An amendment having been proposed by Mr. Manning, a division took place upon it, when leave was given to bring in the bill, by a majority of one hundred and twenty-four to forty-nine.

On the seventh of June, when the second reading of the bill was moved, it was opposed by Sir W. Yonge, Dr. Laurence, Mr. C. Brook, Mr. Dent, and others. Among these lord Castlereagh professed himself a friend to the abolition of the trade, but he differed as to the mode. Sir J. Wrottesley approved of the principle of the bill, but would oppose it in some of its details. Mr. Windham allowed the justice, but differed as to the expediency, of the measure. Mr. Deverell professed himself to have been a friend to it; but he had

then changed his mind. Sir Laurence Parsons wished to see a plan for the gradual extinction of the trade. Lord Temple affirmed, that the bill would seal the death-warrant of every white inhabitant of the islands. The second reading was supported by Sir Ralph Milbank, Mr. Pitt, Fox, William Smith, Whitbread, Francis, Barham, and by Mr. Grenfell and Sir John Newport. Mr. Grenfell observed, that he could not give a silent vote, where the character of the country was concerned. When the question of the abolition first came before the public, he was a warm friend to it; and from that day to this he had cherished the same feelings. He assured Mr. Wilberforce of his constant support. Sir John Newport stated that the Irish nation took a virtuous interest in this noble cause. He ridiculed the idea, that the trade and manufactures of the country would suffer by the measure in contemplation; but, even if they should suffer, he would oppose it. "Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum." Upon a division, there appeared for the second reading one hundred, and against it forty-two.

On the twelfth of June, when a motion was made to go into a committee upon the bill, it was opposed by Mr. Fuller, C. Brook, C. Ellis, Dent, Deverell, and Manning; and it was supported by Sir Robert Buxton, Mr. Barham, and the honorable J. S. Cocks. The latter condemned the imprudence of the planters. Instead of profiting by the discussions which had taken place, and making wise provisions against the great event of the

abolition, which would sooner or later take place, they had only thought of new stratagems to defeat it. He declared his abhorrence of the trade, which he considered to be a national disgrace. The house divided; when there were seventy-nine for the motion, and against it twenty.

On the twenty-seventh of June, the bill was opposed in its last stage by Sir W. Yonge, Mr. Dickenson, G. Rose, Addington, and Dent; and supported by Mr. Pitt, W. Smith, Francis, and Barham; when it was carried by a majority of sixty-nine to thirty-six. It was then taken up to the lords; but on a motion of lord Hawkesbury, then a member of that house, the discussion of it was postponed to the next year.

The session being ended, the committee for the abolition of the Slave-trade increased its number, by the election of the right honorable lord Teignmouth, Dr. Dickson, and Wilson Birkbeck, as members.

In the year 1805, Mr. Wilberforce renewed his motion of the former year. Colonel Tarleton, Sir William Yonge, Mr. Fuller, and Mr. Gascoyne opposed it. Leave, however, was given him to introduce his bill.

On the second reading of it a serious opposition took place; and an amendment was moved for postponing it till that day six months. The amendment was opposed by Mr. Fox and Mr. Huddleston. The latter could not help lifting his voice against this monstrous traffic in the sinews and blood of man, the toleration of which

had so long been the disgrace of the British legislature. He did not charge the enormous guilt resulting from it upon the nation at large; for the nation had washed its hands of it by the numerous petitions it had sent against it; and it had since been a matter of astonishment to all Christendom, how the constitutional guardians of British freedom should have sanctioned elsewhere the greatest system of cruelty and oppression in the world.

He said that a curse attended this trade, even in the mode of defending it. By a certain fatality, none but the vilest arguments were brought forward, which corrupted the very persons who used them. Every one of these was built on the narrow ground of interest; of pecuniary profit; of sordid gain; in opposition to every higher consideration; to every motive that had reference to humanity, justice, and religion; or to that great principle, which comprehended them all. Place only before the most determined advocate of this odious traffic the exact image of himself in the garb and harness of a slave, dragged and whipped about like a beast; place this image also before him, and paint it as that of one without a ray of hope to cheer him; and you would extort from him the reluctant confession, that he would not endure for an hour the misery, to which he condemned his fellow-man for life. How dared he, then, to use this selfish plea of interest against the voice of the generous sympathies of his nature? But even upon this narrow ground the advocates for the

traffic had been defeated. If the unhallowed argument of expediency was worth any thing when opposed to moral rectitude, or if it was to supersede the precepts of Christianity, where was a man to stop, or what line was he to draw? For any thing he knew, it might be physically true, that human blood was the best manure for the land; but who ought to shed it on that account? True expediency, however, was where it ever would be found, on the side of that system, which was most merciful and just. He asked how it happened, that sugar could be imported cheaper from the East Indies, than from the West, notwithstanding the vast difference of the length of the voyages, but on account of the impolicy of slavery, or that it was made in the former case by the industry of free men, and in the latter by the languid drudgery of slaves.

As he had had occasion to advert to the Eastern part of the world, he would make an observation upon an argument, which had been collected from that quarter. The condition of the negroes in the West Indies had been lately compared with that of the Hindoos. But he would observe that the Hindoo, miserable as his *l'ovel* was, had sources of pride and happiness, to which not only the West Indian slave, but even his master, was a stranger. He was to be sure a peasant; and his industry was subservient to the gratification of a European lord. But he was, in his own belief, vastly superior to him. He viewed him as one of the lowest cast. He would not on any consideration eat from

the same plate. He would not suffer his son to marry the daughter of his master, even if she could bring him all the West Indies as her portion. He would observe, too, that the Hindoo peasant drank his water from his native well ; that, if his meal were scanty, he received it from the hand of her, who was most dear to him ; that, when he labored, he labored for her and his offspring. His daily task being finished, he reposed with his family. No retrospect of the happiness of former days, compared with existing misery, disturbed his slumber ; nor horrid dreams occasioned him to wake in agony at the dawn of day. No barbarous sounds of cracking whips reminded him, that with the form and image of a man his destiny was that of the beast of the field. Let the advocates for the bloody traffic state what they had to set off on their side of the question against the comforts and independence of the man, with whom they compared the slave.

The amendment was supported by Sir William Yonge, Sir William Pulteney, Colonel Tarleton, Mr. Gascoyne, C. Brook, and Hiley Addington. On dividing the house upon it, there appeared for it seventy-seven, but against it only seventy.

This loss of the question, after it had been carried in the last year by so great a majority, being quite unexpected, was a matter of severe disappointment ; and might have discouraged the friends of the cause in this infancy of their renewed efforts, if they had not discovered the reason of its failure. After due consideration, it

appeared, that no fewer than nine members, who had never been absent once in sixteen years when it was agitated, gave way to engagements on the day of the motion, from a belief that it was safe. It appeared also, that out of the great number of Irish members, who supported it in the former year, only nine were in the house when it was lost. It appeared also that, previously to this event, a canvass, more importunate than had been heard of on any former occasion, had been made among the latter by those interested in the continuance of the trade. Many of these, unacquainted with the detail of the subject, like the English members, admitted the dismal representations, which were then made to them. The desire of doing good on the one hand, and the fear of doing injury on the other, perplexed them; and in this dubious state they absented themselves at the time mentioned.

The causes of the failure having been found accidental, and capable of a remedy, it was resolved that an attempt should be made immediately in the house in a new form. Accordingly, lord Henry Petty signified his intention of bringing in a bill for the abolition of the foreign part of the Slave-trade; but the impeachment of lord Melville, and other weighty matters coming on, the notice was not acted upon in that session.

## CHAPTER VII.

CONTINUATION FROM JULY, 1805, to JULY, 1806—AUTHOR RETURNS TO HIS DUTY IN THE COMMITTEE—TRAVELS AGAIN ROUND THE KINGDOM—DEATH OF MR. PITT—HIS CHARACTER, AS IT RELATED TO THE QUESTION—MOTION FOR THE ABOLITION OF THE FOREIGN SLAVE-TRADE—RESOLUTION TO TAKE MEASURES FOR THE TOTAL ABOLITION OF IT—ADDRESS TO THE KING TO NEGOTIATE WITH FOREIGN POWERS FOR THEIR CONCURRENCE IN IT—MOTION TO PREVENT ANY NEW VESSEL GOING INTO THE TRADE—THESE CARRIED THROUGH BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

It was now almost certain, to the inexpressible joy of the committee, that the cause, with proper vigilance, could be carried in the next session in the house of commons. It became them, therefore, to prepare to support it. In adverting to measures for this purpose, it occurred to them, that the house of lords, if the question should be then carried to them from the commons, might insist upon hearing evidence on the general subject. But, alas! even the body of witnesses, which had been last collected, was broken by death or dispersion! It was therefore to be formed again. In this situation, it devolved upon me, as I had now returned to the committee after an absence of nine years, to take another journey for this purpose.

This journey I performed with extraordinary success. In the course of it I had also much satisfaction on another account. I found the old friends of the cause still faithful to it. It was remarkable, however, that the youth of the rising generation knew but little about the question.



For the last eight or nine years the committee had not circulated any books; and the debates in the commons during that time had not furnished them with the means of an adequate knowledge concerning it. When, however, I conversed with these, as I travelled along, I discovered a profound attention to what I said; an earnest desire to know more of the subject; and a generous warmth in favor of the injured Africans, which I foresaw could soon be turned into enthusiasm. Hence I perceived that the cause furnished us with endless sources of rallying; and that the ardor, which we had seen with so much admiration in former years, could be easily renewed.

I had scarcely finished my journey, when Mr. Pitt died. This event took place in January, 1806. I shall stop therefore to make a few observations upon his character, as it related to this cause. This I feel myself bound in justice to do, because his sincerity towards it has been generally questioned.

The way in which Mr. Pitt became acquainted with this question, has already been explained. A few doubts having been removed, when it was first started, he professed himself a friend to the abolition. The first proof, which he gave of his friendship to it, is known but to few; but it is, nevertheless, true, that so early as in 1788, he occasioned a communication to be made to the French government, in which he recommended a union of the two countries for the promotion of the great measure. This proposition seemed

to be then new and strange to the court of France; and the answer was not favorable.

From this time his efforts were reduced within the boundaries of his own power. As far, however, as he had scope, he exerted them. If we look at him in his parliamentary capacity, it must be acknowledged by all, that he took an active, strenuous, and consistent part, and this year after year, by which he realized his professions. In my own private communications with him, which were frequent, he never failed to give proofs of a similar disposition. I had always free access to him. I had no previous note or letter to write for admission. Whatever papers I wanted, he ordered. He exhibited also in his conversation with me on these occasions marks of a more than ordinary interest in the welfare of the cause. Among the subjects which were then started, there was one, which was always near his heart. This was the civilization of Africa. He looked upon this great work as a debt due to that continent for the many injuries we had inflicted upon it: and had the abolition succeeded sooner, as in the infancy of his exertions he had hoped, I know he had a plan, suited no doubt to the capaciousness of his own mind, for such establishments in Africa, as he conceived would promote in due time this important end.

I believe it will be said, notwithstanding what I have advanced, that if Mr. Pitt had exerted himself as the minister of the country in behalf of the abolition, he could have carried it. This

brings the matter to an issue ; for unquestionably the charge of insincerity, as it related to this great question, arose from the mistaken notion, that, as his measures in parliament were supported by great majorities, he could do as he pleased there. But they who hold this opinion must be informed, that there were great difficulties, against which he had to struggle on this subject. The lord chancellor Thurlow ran counter to his wishes almost at the very outset. Lord Liverpool and Mr. Dundas did the same. Thus, to go no further, three of the most powerful members of the cabinet were in direct opposition to him. The abolition, then, amidst this difference of opinion, could never become a cabinet measure ; but if so, then all his parliamentary efforts in this case wanted their usual authority, and he could only exert his influence as a private man.\*

But a difficulty, still more insuperable, presented itself, in an occurrence which took place in the year 1791, but which is much too delicate to be mentioned. The explanation of it, however, would convince the reader, that all the efforts of Mr. Pitt from that day were rendered useless : I mean as to bringing the question, as a minister of state, to a favorable issue.

But though Mr. Pitt did not carry this great question, he was yet one of the greatest supporters

\* This he did with great effect on one or two occasions. On the motion of Mr. Cawthorne in 1791, the cause hung as it were by a thread ; and would have failed that day, to my knowledge, but for his seasonable exertions.

of it. He fostered it in its infancy. If, in his public situation, he had then set his face against it, where would have been our hope? He upheld it also in its childhood; and though in this state of its existence it did not gain from his protection all the strength which it was expected it would have acquired, he yet kept it from falling, till his successors, in whose administration a greater number of favorable circumstances concurred to give it vigor, brought it to triumphant maturity.

Lord Grenville and Mr. Fox, having been called to the head of the executive government on the death of Mr. Pitt, the cause was ushered into parliament under new auspices. In a former year his majesty had issued a proclamation, by which British merchants were forbidden (with certain defined exceptions) to import slaves into the colonies which had been conquered by the British arms in the course of the war. This circumstance afforded an opportunity of trying the question in the house of commons with the greatest hope of success. Accordingly Sir A. Pigott, the attorney-general, as an officer of the crown, brought in a bill on the thirty-first of March, 1806, the first object of which was, to give effect to the proclamation now mentioned. The second was, to prohibit British subjects from being engaged in importing slaves into the colonies of any foreign power, whether hostile or neutral. And the third was, to prohibit British subjects and British capital from being employed in carrying on

a Slave-trade in foreign ships; and also to prevent the outfit of foreign ships from British ports.

Sir A. Pigott, on the introduction of this bill, made an appropriate speech. The bill was supported by Mr. Fox, Sir William Yonge, Mr. Brook, and Mr. Bagwell; but opposed by generals Tarleton and Gascoyne, Mr. Rose, Sir Robert Peel, and Sir Charles Price. On the third reading, a division being called for, there appeared for it thirty-five, and against it only thirteen.

On the seventh of May it was introduced into the lords. The supporters of it there were, the duke of Gloucester, lord Grenville, the bishops of London and St. Asaph, the earl of Buckinghamshire, and the lords Holland, Lauderdale, Auckland, Sidmouth, and Ellenborough. The opposers were, the dukes of Clarence and Sussex, the marquis of Sligo, the earl of Westmoreland, and the lords Eldon and Sheffield. At length a division took place, when there appeared to be in favor of it forty-three, and against it eighteen.

During the discussions, to which this bill gave birth, lord Grenville and Mr. Fox declared in substance, in their respective houses of parliament, that they felt the question of the Slave-trade to be one which involved the dearest interests of humanity, and the most urgent claims of policy, justice, and religion; and that, should they succeed in effecting its abolition, they would regard that success as entailing more true glory on their administration, and more honor and advantage on their country, than any other measure in which

they could be engaged. The bill having passed, (the first which dismembered this cruel trade,) it was thought proper to follow it up in a prudent manner; and, as there was not then time in the advanced period of the session to bring in another for the total extinction of it, to move a resolution, by which both houses should record those principles, on which the propriety of the latter measure was founded. It was judged also expedient that Mr. Fox, as the prime minister in the house of commons, should introduce it there.

On the tenth of June Mr. Fox rose. He began by saying that the motion, with which he should conclude, would tend in its consequences to effect the total abolition of the Slave-trade; and he confessed that, since he had sat in that house, (a period of between thirty and forty years,) if he had done nothing else, but had only been instrumental in carrying through this measure, he should think his life well spent; and should retire quite satisfied that he had not lived in vain.

In adverting to the principle of the trade, he noticed some strong expressions of Mr. Burke concerning it. "To deal in human flesh and blood," said that great man, "or to deal, not in the labor of men, but in men themselves, was to devour the root instead of enjoying the fruit of human diligence."

Mr. Fox then took a view of the opinions of different members of the house on this great question; and showed that though many had opposed the abolition, all but two or three, among whom

were the members for Liverpool, had confessed that the trade ought to be done away. He then went over the different resolutions of the house on the subject, and concluded from thence, that they were bound to support his motion.

He combated the argument, that the abolition would ruin the West Indian islands. In doing this he paid a handsome compliment to the memory of Mr. Pitt, whose speech upon this particular point was, he said, the most powerful and convincing of any he had ever heard. Indeed they, who had not heard it, could have no notion of it. It was a speech, of which he would say with the Roman author, reciting the words of the Athenian orator, "Quid esset, si ipsum audivissetis!" It was a speech no less remarkable for splendid eloquence, than for solid sense and convincing reason; supported by calculations founded on facts, and conclusions drawn from premises, as correctly as if they had been mathematical propositions; all tending to prove that, instead of the West Indian plantations suffering an injury, they would derive a material benefit by the abolition of the Slave-trade. He then called upon the friends of this great man to show their respect for his memory by their votes; and he concluded with moving, "that this house, considering the African Slave-trade to be contrary to the principles of justice, humanity, and policy, will, with all practicable expedition, take effectual measures for the abolition of the said trade, in such a manner, and at such a period, as may be deemed advisable."

Sir Ralph Milbank rose, and seconded the motion.

General Tarleton rose next. He deprecated the abolition, on account of the effect which it would have on the trade and revenue of the country.

Mr. Francis said the merchants of Liverpool were at liberty to ask for compensation ; but he, for one, would never grant it for the loss of a trade, which had been declared to be contrary to humanity and justice. As a uniform friend to this great cause, he wished Mr. Fox had not introduced a resolution, but a real bill for the abolition of the Slave-trade. He believed that both houses were then disposed to do it away. He wished the golden opportunity might not be lost.

Lord Castlereagh thought it a proposition, on which no one could entertain a doubt that the Slave-trade was a great evil in itself ; and that it was the duty and policy of parliament to extirpate it ; but he did not think the means offered were adequate to the end proposed. The abolition, as a political question, was a difficult one. The year 1796 had been once fixed upon by the house, as the period when the trade was to cease ; but, when the time arrived, the resolution was not executed. This was a proof, either that the house did not wish for the event, or that they judged it impracticable. It would be impossible, he said, to get other nations to concur in the measure ; and even if they were to concur, it could not be effected. We might restrain the



subjects of the parent-state from following the trade ; but we could not those in our colonies. A hundred frauds would be committed by these, which we could not detect. He did not mean by this, that the evil was to go on for ever. Had a wise plan been proposed at first, it might have been half-cured by this time. The present resolution would do no good. It was vague, indefinite, and unintelligible. Such resolutions were only the slave-merchants' harvests. They would go for more slaves than usual in the interim. He should have advised a system of duties on fresh importations of slaves, progressively increasing to a certain extent ; and that the amount of these duties should be given to the planters, as a bounty to encourage the negro-population upon their estates. Nothing could be done, unless we went hand in hand with the latter. But he should deliver himself more fully on this subject, when any thing specific should be brought forward in the shape of a bill.

Sir S. Romilly, the solicitor-general, differed from lord Castlereagh ; for he thought the resolution of Mr. Fox was very simple and intelligible. If there was a proposition vague and indefinite, it was that advanced by the noble lord, of a system of duties on fresh importations, rising progressively, and this under the patronage and co-operation of the planters. Who could measure the space between the present time and the abolition of the trade, if that measure were to depend upon the approbation of the colonies ?

The cruelty and injustice of the Slave-trade had been established by evidence beyond a doubt. It had been shown to be carried on by rapine, robbery, and murder; by fomenting and encouraging wars; by false accusations; and imaginary crimes. The unhappy victims were torn away not only in the time of war, but of profound peace. They were then carried across the Atlantic, in a manner too horrible to describe; and afterwards subjected to eternal slavery. In support of the continuance of such a traffic, he knew of nothing but assertions already disproved, and arguments already refuted. Since the year 1796, when it was to cease by a resolution of parliament, no less than three hundred and sixty thousand Africans had been torn away from their native land. What an accumulation was this to our former guilt!

General Gascoyne made two extraordinary assertions: First, that the trade was defensible on Scriptural ground. "Both thy bondmen and thy bondmaids, which thou shalt have, shall be of the heathen, that are round about thee; of them shall you have bondmen and bondmaids. And thou shalt take them as an heritage for thy children after thee to inherit them for a possession; they shall be thy bondmen for ever." Secondly, that the trade had been so advantageous to this country, that it would have been advisable even to institute a new one, if the old had not existed.

Mr. Wilberforce replied to General Gascoyne.

He then took a view of the speech of lord Castle-reagh, which he answered point by point. In the course of his observations he showed that the system of duties, progressively increasing, as proposed by the noble lord, would be one of the most effectual modes of perpetuating the Slave-trade. He exposed also the false foundation of the hope of any reliance on the co-operation of the colonists. The house, he said, had, on the motion of Mr. Ellis in the year 1797, prayed his majesty to consult with the colonial legislatures to take such measures as might conduce to the gradual abolition of the African Slave-trade. This address was transmitted to them by lord Melville. It was received in some of the islands with a declaration, "that they possibly might, in some instances, endeavor to improve the condition of their slaves; but they should do this, not with any view to the abolition of the Slave-trade; for they considered that trade as their birth-right, which could not be taken from them; and that we should deceive ourselves by supposing that they would agree to such a measure." He desired to add to this, the declaration of General Prevost in his public letter from Dominica. Did he not say, when asked what steps had been taken there in consequence of the resolution of the house in 1797, "that the act of the legislature, entitled an act for the encouragement, protection, and better government of slaves, appeared to him to have been considered, from the day it was passed until this hour, as a political measure to avert the interference of

the mother-country in the management of the slaves?"

Sir William Yonge censured the harsh language of Sir Samuel Romilly, who had applied the terms rapine, robbery, and murder, to those who were connected with the Slave-trade. He considered the resolution of Mr. Fox as a prelude to a bill for the abolition of that traffic, and this bill as a prelude to emancipation, which would not only be dangerous in itself, but would change the state of property in the islands.

Lord Henry Petty, after having commented on the speeches of Sir S. Romilly and lord Castle-reagh, proceeded to state his own opinion on the trade; which was, that it was contrary to justice, humanity, and sound policy, all of which he considered to be inseparable. On its commencement in Africa the wickedness began. It produced there fraud and violence, robbery and murder. It gave birth to false accusations, and a mockery of justice. It was the parent of every crime, which could at once degrade and afflict the human race. After spreading vice and misery all over this continent, it doomed its unhappy victims to hardships and cruelties which were worse than death. The first of these was conspicuous in their transportation. It was found there, that cruelty beget cruelty; that the system, wicked in its beginning, was equally so in its progress; and that it perpetuated its miseries wherever it was carried on. Nor was it baneful only to the objects, but to the promoters

of it. The loss of British seamen in this traffic was enormous. One-fifth of all, who were employed in it, perished; that is, they became the victims of a system, which was founded on fraud, robbery, and murder; and which procured to the British nation nothing but the execration of mankind. Nor had we yet done with the evils which attended it; for it brought in its train the worst of all moral effects, not only as it respected the poor slaves, when transported to the colonies, but as it respected those who had concerns with them there. The arbitrary power, which it conferred, afforded men of bad dispositions full scope for the exercise of their passions; and it rendered men, constitutionally of good dispositions, callous to the misery of others. Thus it depraved the nature of all who were connected with it. These considerations had made him a friend to the abolition from the time he was capable of reasoning upon it. They were considerations, also, which determined the house in the year 1782 to adopt a measure of the same kind as the present. Had any thing happened to change the opinion of members since? On the contrary, they had now the clearest evidence, that all the arguments then used against the abolition were fallacious; being founded not upon truth, but on assertions devoid of all truth, and derived from ignorance or prejudice.

Having made these remarks, he proved by a number of facts the folly of the argument, that the Africans labored under such a total degrada-

tion of mental and moral faculties, that they were made for slavery.

He then entered into the great subject of population. He showed that in all countries, where there were no unnatural hardships, mankind would support themselves. He applied this reasoning to the negro population in the West Indies; which he maintained could not only be kept up, but increased, without any further importations from Africa.

He then noticed the observations of Sir W. Yonge on the words of Sir S. Romilly; and desired him to reserve his indignation for those who were guilty of acts of rapine, robbery, and murder, instead of venting it on those who only did their duty in describing them. Never were accounts more shocking than those lately sent to government from the West Indies. Lord Seaforth, and the attorney-general, could not refrain, in explaining them, from the use of the words murder and torture. And did it become members of that house (in order to accommodate the nerves of the friends of the Slave-trade) to soften down their expressions, when they were speaking on that subject; and to desist from calling that murder and torture, for which a governor and the attorney-general of one of the islands could find no better name?

After making observations relative to the co-operation of foreign powers in this great work, he hoped that the house would not suffer itself to be drawn, either by opposition or by ridicule, to the

right or to the left; but that it would advance straight forward to the accomplishment of the most magnanimous act of justice, that was ever achieved by any legislature in the world.

Mr. Rose declared, that on the very first promulgation of this question, he had proposed to the friends of it the very plan of his noble friend, lord Castlereagh; namely, a system of progressive duties, and of bounties for the promotion of the negro population. This he said to show that he was friendly to the principle of the measure. He would now observe, that he did not wholly like the present resolution. It was too indefinite. He wished also, that something had been said on the subject of compensation. He was fearful also, lest the abolition should lead to the dangerous change of emancipation. The negroes, he said, could not be in a better state, or more faithful to their masters, than they were. In three attacks made by the enemy on Dominica, where he had a large property, arms had been put into their hands; and every one of them had exerted himself faithfully. With respect to the cruel acts in Barbadoes, an account of which had been sent to government by lord Seaforth and the attorney-general of Barbadoes, he had read them; and never had he read any thing on this subject with more horror. He would agree to the strongest measures for the prevention of such acts in future. He would even give up the colony, which should refuse to make the wilful murder of a slave felony. But as to the other or common evils complained of, he thought

the remedy should be gradual ; and such also, as the planters would concur in. He would, nevertheless, not oppose the present resolution.

Mr. Barham considered compensation but reasonable, where losses were to accrue from the measure, when it should be put in execution ; but he believed that the amount of it would be much less than was apprehended. He considered emancipation, though so many fears had been expressed about it, as forming no objection to the abolition, though he had estates in the West Indies himself. Such a measure, if it could be accomplished successfully, would be an honor to the country, and a blessing to the planters ; but preparation must be made for it by rendering the slaves fit for freedom, and by creating in them an inclination to free labor. Such a change could only be the work of time.

Sir John Newport said that the expressions of Sir S. Romilly, which had given such offence, had been used by others ; and would be used with propriety, while the trade lasted. Some slave-dealers of Liverpool had lately attempted to prejudice certain merchants of Ireland in their favor. But none of their representations answered ; and it was remarkable, that the reply made to them was in these words. “We will have no share in a traffic, consisting in rapine, blood, and murder.” He then took a survey of a system of duties progressively increasing, and showed, that it would be utterly inefficient ; and that there was no real



remedy for the different evils complained of, but in the immediate prohibition of the trade.

Mr. Canning renewed his professions of friendship to the cause. He did not like the present resolution; yet he would vote for it. He should have been better pleased with a bill, which would strike at once at the root of this detestable commerce.

Mr. Manning wished the question to be deferred to the next session. He hoped compensation would then be brought forward as connected with it. Nothing, however, effectual could be done without the concurrence of the planters.

Mr. William Smith noticed, in a striking manner, the different inconsistencies in the arguments of those who contended for the continuance of the trade.

Mr. Windham deprecated not only the Slave-trade, but slavery also. They were essentially connected with each other. They were both evils, and ought both of them to be done away. Indeed, if emancipation would follow the abolition, he should like the latter measure the better. Rapine, robbery, and murder were the true characteristics of this traffic. The same epithets had not indeed been applied to slavery, because this was a condition, in which some part of the human race had been at every period of the history of the world. It was, however, a state, which ought not to be allowed to exist. But notwithstanding all these confessions, he should weigh well the consequences of the abolition before he gave it his support.

It would be on a balance between the evils themselves and the consequences of removing them, that he should decide for himself on this question.

Mr. Fox took a view of all the arguments, which had been advanced by the opponents of the abolition; and having given an appropriate answer to each, the house divided, when there appeared for the resolution one hundred and fourteen, and against it but fifteen.

Immediately after this division Mr. Wilberforce moved an address to his majesty, "praying that he would be graciously pleased to direct a negotiation to be entered into, by which foreign powers should be invited to co-operate with his majesty in measures to be adopted for the abolition of the African Slave-trade."

This address was carried without a division. It was also moved and carried, that "these resolutions be communicated to the lords; and that their concurrence should be desired therein."

On the twenty-fourth of June the lords met to consider of the resolution and address. The earl of Westmoreland proposed, that both counsel and evidence should be heard against them; but his proposition was overruled.

Lord Grenville then read the resolution of the commons. This resolution, he said, stated first, that the Slave-trade was contrary to humanity, justice, and sound policy. That it was contrary to humanity was obvious; for humanity might be said to be sympathy for the distress of others, or a desire to accomplish benevolent ends by good

means. But did not the Slave-trade convey ideas the very reverse of this definition? It deprived men of all those comforts, in which it pleased the Creator to make the happiness of his creatures to consist, of the blessings of society, of the charities of the dear relationships of husband, wife, father, son, and kindred; of the due discharge of the relative duties of these, and of that freedom, which in its pure and natural sense was one of the greatest gifts of God to man.

It was impossible to read the evidence, as it related to this trade, without acknowledging the inhumanity of it, and our own disgrace. By what means was it kept up in Africa? By wars instigated, not by the passions of the natives, but by our avarice. He knew it would be said in reply to this, that the slaves, who were purchased by us, would be put to death, if we were not to buy them. But what should we say, if it should turn out, that we were the causes of those very cruelties, which we affected to prevent? But, if it were not so, ought the first nation in the world to condescend to be the executioner of savages?

Another way of keeping up the Slave-trade was by the practice of man-stealing. The evidence was particularly clear upon this head. This practice included violence, and often bloodshed. The inhumanity of it, therefore, could not be doubted.

The unhappy victims being thus procured, were conveyed, he said, across the Atlantic in a manner which justified the charge of inhumanity again. Indeed, the suffering here was so great, that nei-

ther the mind could conceive, nor the tongue describe, it. He had said on a former occasion, that in their transportation there was a greater portion of misery condensed within a smaller space, than had ever existed in the known world. He would repeat his words ; for he did not know how he could express himself better on the subject. And, after all these horrors, what was their destiny ? It was such as justified the charge in the resolution again : for, after having survived the sickness arising from the passage, they were doomed to interminable slavery.

We had been, he said, so much accustomed to words, descriptive of the cruelty of this traffic, that we had almost forgotten their meaning. He wished that some person, educated as an Englishman, with suitable powers of eloquence, but now for the first time informed of all the horrors of it, were to address their lordships upon it, and he was sure that they would instantly determine that it should cease. But the continuance of it had rendered cruelty familiar to us ; and the recital of its horrors had been so frequent, that we could now hear them stated without being affected as we ought to be. He entreated their lordships, however, to endeavor to conceive the hard case of the unhappy victims of it ; and as he had led them to the last stage of their miserable existence, which was in the colonies, to contemplate it there. They were there under the arbitrary will of a cruel task-master from morning till night. When they went to

rest, would not their dreams be frightful? When they awoke, would they not awake

—“only to discover sights of woe,  
Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace  
And rest can never dwell, hope never comes  
That comes to all; but torture without end  
Still urges?”—

They knew no change, except in the humor of their masters, to whom their whole destiny was intrusted. We might perhaps flatter ourselves with saying, that they were subject to the will of Englishmen. But Englishmen were not better than others, when in possession of arbitrary power. The very fairest exercise of it was a never-failing corrupter of the heart. But suppose it were allowed, that self-interest might operate some little against cruelty; yet where was the interest of the overseer or the driver? But he knew it would be said, that the evils complained of in the colonies had been mitigated. There might be instances of this; but they could never be cured, while slavery existed. Slavery took away more than half of the human character. Hence the practice, where it existed, of rejecting the testimony of the slave: but, if his testimony was rejected, where could be his redress against his oppressor?

Having shown the inhumanity, he would proceed to the second point in the resolution, or the injustice, of the trade. We had two ideas of justice, first, as it belonged to society by virtue of a social compact; and, secondly, as it belonged to men, not as citizens of a community, but as beings

of one common nature. In a state of nature, man had a right to the fruit of his own labor absolutely to himself; and one of the main purposes, for which he entered into society, was, that he might be better protected in the possession of his rights. In both cases therefore it was manifestly unjust, that a man should be made to labor during the whole of his life, and yet have no benefit from his labor. Hence the Slave-trade and the colonial slavery were a violation of the very principle upon which all law for the protection of property was founded. Whatever benefit was derived from that trade to an individual, it was derived from dishonor and dishonesty. He forced from the unhappy victim of it that, which the latter did not wish to give him; and he gave to the same victim that, which he in vain attempted to show was an equivalent to the thing he took, it being a thing for which there was no equivalent; and which, if he had not obtained by force, he would not have possessed at all. Nor could there be any answer to this reasoning, unless it could be proved, that it had pleased God to give to the inhabitants of Britain a property in the liberty and life of the natives of Africa. But he would go further on this subject. The injustice complained of was not confined to the bare circumstance of robbing them of the right to their own labor. It was conspicuous throughout the system: They, who bought them, became guilty of all the crimes which had been committed in procuring them; and, when they possessed them,

of all the crimes which belonged to their inhuman treatment. The injustice in the latter case amounted frequently to murder. For what was it but murder to pursue a practice, which produced untimely death to thousands of innocent and helpless beings? It was a duty, which their lordships owed to their Creator, if they hoped for mercy, to do away this monstrous oppression.

With respect to the impolicy of the trade (the third point in the resolution,) he would say at once, that whatever was inhuman and unjust must be impolitic. He had, however, no objection to argue the point upon its own particular merits: and, first, he would observe, that a great man, Mr. Pitt, now no more, had exerted his vast powers on many subjects to the admiration of his hearers; but on none more successfully than on the subject of the abolition of the Slave-trade. He proved, after making an allowance for the price paid for the slaves in the West Indies, for the loss of them in the seasoning, and for the expense of maintaining them afterwards, and comparing these particulars with the amount in value of their labor there, that the evils endured by the victims of the traffic were no gain to the master, in whose service they took place. Indeed, Mr. Long had laid it down in his history of Jamaica, that the best way to secure the planters from ruin would be to do that, which the resolution recommended. It was notorious, that when any planter was in distress, and sought to relieve himself by increasing the labor on his estate by means of the

purchase of new slaves, the measure invariably tended to his destruction. What then was the importation of fresh Africans but a system, tending to the general ruin of the islands?

But it had often been said, that without fresh importations the population of the slaves could not be supported in the islands. This, however, was a mistake. It had arisen from reckoning the deaths of the imported Africans, of whom so many were lost in the seasoning, among the deaths of the Creole-slaves. He did not mean to say, that under the existing degree of misery the population would greatly increase; but he would maintain, that, if the deaths and the births were calculated upon those, who were either born, or who had been a long time in the islands, so as to be considered as natives, it would be found that the population had not only been kept up, but that it had been increased.

If it was true, that the labor of a free man was cheaper than that of a slave; and also that the labor of a long imported slave was cheaper than that of a fresh imported one; and again, that the chances of mortality were much more numerous among the newly imported slaves in the West Indies, than among those of old standing there, (propositions, which he took to be established,) we should see new arguments for the impolicy of the trade.

It might be stated also, that the importation of vast bodies of men, who had been robbed of their rights, and grievously irritated on that account,



into our colonies (where their miserable condition opened new sources of anger and revenge) was the importation only of the seeds of insurrection into them. And here he could not but view with astonishment the reasoning of the West Indian planters, who held up the example of St. Domingo as a warning against the abolition of the Slave-trade; because the continuance of it was one of the great causes of the insurrections and subsequent miseries in that devoted island. Let us but encourage importations in the same rapid progression of increase every year, which took place in St. Domingo, and we should witness the same effect in our own islands.

To expose the impolicy of the trade further, he would observe, that it was an allowed axiom, that as the condition of man was improved, he became more useful. The history of our own country, in very early times, exhibited instances of internal slavery, and this to a considerable extent. But we should find that precisely in proportion as that slavery was ameliorated, the power and prosperity of the country flourished. This was exactly applicable to the case in question. There could be no general amelioration of slavery in the West Indies, while the Slave-trade lasted; but, if we were to abolish it, we should make it the interest of every owner of slaves to do that, which would improve their condition; and which indeed would lead ultimately to the annihilation of slavery itself. This great event, however,

could not be accomplished at once. It could only be effected in a course of time.

It would be endless, he said, to go into all the cases, which would manifest the impolicy of this odious traffic. Inhuman as it was, unjust as it was, he believed it to be equally impolitic; and if their lordships should be of this opinion also, he hoped they would agree to that part of the resolution, in which these truths were expressed. With respect to the other part of it, or that they would proceed to abolish the trade, he observed, that neither the time nor the manner of doing it were specified. Hence, if any of them should differ as to these particulars, they might yet vote for the resolution; as they were not pledged to any thing definite in these respects; provided they thought that the trade should be abolished at some time or other; and he did not believe, that there was any one of them, who would sanction its continuance for ever.

Lord Hawkesbury said, that he did not mean to discuss the question on the ground of justice and humanity, as contradistinguished from sound policy. If it could fairly be made out, that the African Slave-trade was contrary to justice and humanity, it ought to be abolished. It did not, however, follow, because a great evil subsisted, that therefore it should be removed; for it might be comparatively a less evil, than that which would accompany the attempt to remove it. The noble lord, who had just spoken, had exemplified this: for though slavery was a great evil in itself,

he was of opinion, that it could not be done away but in a course of time.

A state of slavery, he said, had existed in Africa from the earliest time ; and, unless other nations would concur with England in the measure of the abolition, we could not change it for the better.

Slavery had existed also throughout all Europe. It had now happily in a great measure been done away. But how ? Not by acts of parliament ; for these might have retarded the event ; but by the progress of civilization, which removed the evil in a gradual and rational manner.

He then went over the same ground of argument, as when a member of the commons in 1792. He said that the inhumanity of the abolition was visible in this, that not one slave less would be taken from Africa ; and that such, as were taken from it, would suffer more than they did now, in the hands of foreigners. He maintained also, as before, that the example of St. Domingo afforded one of the strongest arguments against the abolition of the trade. And he concluded by objecting to the resolution, inasmuch as it could do no good ; for the substance of it would be to be discussed again in a future session.

The bishop of London (Dr. Porteus) began by noticing the concession of the last speaker, namely, that, if the trade was contrary to humanity and justice, it ought to be abolished. He expected, he said, that the noble lord would have proved, that it was not contrary to these great principles, before he had supported its continuance ; but not

a word had he said to show, that the basis of the resolution in these respects was false. It followed then, he thought, that as the noble lord had not disproved the premises, he was bound to abide by the conclusion.

The ways, he said, in which the Africans were reduced to slavery in their own country, were by wars, many of which were excited for the purpose; by the breaking up of villages; by kidnapping; and by convictions for a violation of their own laws. Of the latter class many were accused falsely, and of crimes which did not exist. He then read a number of extracts from the evidence examined before the privy council, and from the histories of those, who having lived in Africa, had thrown light upon this subject, before the question was agitated. All these, he said, (and similar instances could be multiplied,) proved the truth of the resolution, that the African Slave-trade was contrary to the principles of humanity, justice, and sound policy.

It was moreover, he said, contrary to the principles of the religion we professed. It was not superfluous to say this, when it had been so frequently asserted, that it was sanctioned both by the Jewish and the Christian dispensation. With respect to the Jews he would observe, that there was no such thing as perpetual slavery among them. Their slaves were of two kinds, those of their own nation, and those from the country round about them. The former were to be set free on the seventh year; and the rest, of what-

ever nation, on the fiftieth, or on the year of Jubilee. With respect to the Christian dispensation, it was a libel to say that it countenanced such a traffic. It opposed it both in its spirit and in its principle. Nay, it opposed it positively; for it classed men-stealers, or slave-traders, among the murderers of fathers and mothers and the most profane criminals upon earth.

The antiquity of slavery in Africa, which the noble lord had glanced at, afforded, he said, no argument for its continuance. Such a mode of defence would prevent for ever the removal of any evil. It would justify the practice of the Chinese, who exposed their infants in the streets to perish. It would also justify piracy; for that practice existed long before we knew any thing of the African Slave-trade.

He then combated the argument, that we did a kindness to the Africans by taking them from their homes; and concluded, by stating to their lordships, that, if they refused to sanction the resolution, they would establish these principles, "that though individuals might not rob and murder, yet that nations might; that though individuals incurred the penalties of death by such practices, yet that bodies of men might commit them with impunity for the purposes of lucre; and that for such purposes they were not only to be permitted, but encouraged."

The lord chancellor (Erskine) confessed, that he was not satisfied with his own conduct on this subject. He acknowledged with deep contrition,

that, during the time he was a member of the other house, he had not once attended, when this great question was discussed.

In the West Indies he could say, personally, that the slaves were well treated, where he had an opportunity of seeing them. But no judgment was to be formed there with respect to the evils complained of. They must be appreciated as they existed in the trade. Of these he had also been an eye-witness. It was on this account that he felt contrition for not having attended the house on this subject; for there were some cruelties in this traffic which the human imagination could not aggravate. He had witnessed such scenes over the whole coast of Africa: and he could say, that, if their lordships could only have a sudden glimpse of them, they would be struck with horror; and would be astonished, that they could ever have been permitted to exist. What then would they say to their continuance year after year, and from age to age.

From information, which he could not dispute, he was warranted in saying, that on this continent husbands were fraudulently and forcibly severed from their wives, and parents from their children; and that all the ties of blood and affection were torn up by the roots. He had himself seen the unhappy natives put together in heaps in the hold of a ship, where, with every possible attention to them, their situation must have been intolerable. He had also heard proved, in courts of justice, facts still more dreadful than those which he had

seen. One of these he would just mention. The slaves on board a certain ship rose in a mass to liberate themselves; and having advanced far in the pursuit of their object, it became necessary to repel them by force. Some of them yielded; some of them were killed in the scuffle; but many of them actually jumped into the sea, and were drowned; thus preferring death to the misery of their situation; while others hung to the ship, repenting of their rashness, and bewailing with frightful noises their horrid fate. Thus the whole vessel exhibited but one hideous scene of wretchedness. They, who were subdued, and secured in chains, were seized with the flux, which carried many of them off. These things were proved in a trial before a British jury, which had to consider, whether this was a loss, which fell within the policy of insurance, the slaves being regarded as if they had been only a cargo of dead matter. He could mention other instances, but they were much too shocking to be described. Surely their lordships could never consider such a traffic to be consistent with humanity or justice. It was impossible.

That the trade had long subsisted there was no doubt; but this was no argument for its continuance. Many evils of much longer standing had been done away; and it was always our duty to attempt to remove them. Should we not exult in the consideration, that we, the inhabitants of a small island, at the extremity of the globe, almost at its north pole, were become the morning star

to enlighten the nations of the earth, and to conduct them out of the shades of darkness into the realms of light ; thus exhibiting to an astonished and an admiring world the blessings of a free constitution ? Let us then not allow such a glorious opportunity to escape us.

It had been urged that we should suffer by the abolition of the Slave-trade. He believed we should not suffer. He believed that our duty and our interest were inseparable : and he had no difficulty in saying, in the face of the world, that his own opinion was, that the interests of a nation would be best preserved by its adherence to the principles of humanity, justice, and religion.

The earl of Westmoreland said that the African Slave-trade might be contrary to humanity and justice, and yet it might be politic ; at least, it might be inconsistent with humanity, and yet be not inconsistent with justice : this was the case, when we executed a criminal, or engaged in war.

It was, however, not contrary to justice ; for justice in this case must be measured by the law of nations. But the purchase of slaves was not contrary to this law. The Slave-trade was a trade with the consent of the inhabitants of two nations, and procured by no terror, nor by any act of violence whatever. Slavery had existed from the first ages of the world, not only in Africa, but throughout the habitable globe ; among the Persians, Greeks, and Romans ; and he could compare, with great advantage to his argument, the wretched condition of the slaves in these ancient



states with that of those in our colonies. Slavery too had been allowed in a nation, which was under the special direction of Providence. The Jews were allowed to hold the heathen in bondage. He admitted that what the learned prelate had said relative to the emancipation of the latter in the year of jubilee was correct; but he denied that his quotation relative to the stealers of men referred to the Christian religion. It was a mere allusion to that, which was done contrary to the law of nations, which was the only measure of justice between states.

With respect to the inhumanity of the trade, he would observe, that if their lordships, sitting there as legislators, were to set their faces against every thing which appeared to be inhuman, much of the security on which their lives and property depended, might be shaken, if not totally destroyed. The question was not whether there was not some evil attending the Slave-trade, but whether by the measure now before them they should increase or diminish the quantum of human misery in the world. He believed, for one, considering the internal state of Africa, and the impossibility of procuring the concurrence of foreign nations in the measure, that they would not be able to do any good by the adoption of it.

As to the impolicy of the trade, the policy of it, on the other hand, was so great that he trembled at the consequences of its abolition. The property connected with this question amounted to a hundred millions. The annual produce of the

islands was eighteen millions, and it yielded a revenue of four millions annually. How was this immense property and income to be preserved? Some had said it would be preserved, because the black population in the islands could be kept up without further supplies. But the planters denied this assertion; and they were the best judges of the subject.

He condemned the resolution as a libel upon the wisdom of the law of the land, and upon the conduct of their ancestors. He condemned it also, because, if followed up, it would lead to the abolition of the trade, and the abolition of the trade to the emancipation of the slaves in our colonies.

The bishop of St. Asaph (Dr. Horsely) said that, allowing the slaves in the West Indies even to be pampered with delicacies, or to be put to rest on a bed of roses, they could not be happy. for—a slave would be still a slave. The question, however, was not concerning the alteration of their condition, but whether we should abolish the practice, by which they were put in that condition? Whether it was humane, just, and politic in us so to place them? This question was easily answered; for he found it difficult to form any one notion of humanity, which did not include a desire of promoting the happiness of others; and he knew of no other justice than that, which was founded on the principle of doing to others, as we should wish they should do to us. And these principles of humanity and

justice were so clear that he found it difficult to make them clearer. Perhaps no difficulty was greater than that of arguing a self-evident proposition, and such he took to be the character of the proposition that the Slave-trade was inhuman and unjust.

It had been said that slavery had existed from the beginning of the world. He would allow it. But had such a trade as the Slave-trade ever existed before? Would the noble earl, who had talked of the slavery of ancient Rome and Greece, assert that in the course of his whole reading, however profound it might have been, he had found any thing resembling such a traffic? Where did it appear in history, that ships were regularly fitted out to fetch away tens of thousands of persons annually, against their will, from their native land; that these were subject to personal indignities and arbitrary punishments during their transportation: and that a certain proportion of them, owing to suffocation and other cruel causes, uniformly perished? He averred that nothing like the African Slave-trade was ever practised in any nation upon earth.

If the trade then was repugnant, as he maintained it was, to justice and humanity, he did not see how, without aiding and abetting injustice and inhumanity, any man could sanction it: and he thought that the noble baron (Hawkesbury) was peculiarly bound to support the resolution; for he had admitted that if it could be shown that the trade was contrary to these principles, the

question would be at an end. Now this contrariety had been made apparent, and his lordship had not even attempted to refute it.

He would say but little on the subject of revealed religion, as it related to this question, because the reverend prelate, near him, had spoken so fully upon it. He might observe, however, that at the end of the sixth year, when the Hebrew slave was emancipated, he was to be furnished liberally from the flock, the floor, and the winepress of his master.

Lord Holland lamented the unfaithfulness of the noble baron (Hawkesbury) to his own principles, and the inflexible opposition of the noble earl (Westmoreland) from both which circumstances he despaired for ever of any assistance from them to this glorious cause. The latter wished to hear evidence on the subject, for the purpose, doubtless, of delay. He was sure that the noble earl did not care what the evidence would say on either side; for his mind was made up, that the trade ought not to be abolished.

The noble earl had made a difference between humanity, justice, and sound policy. God forbid, that we should ever admit such distinctions in this country! But he had gone further, and said that a thing might be inhuman, and yet not unjust; and he put the case of the execution of a criminal in support of it. Did he not by this position confound all notions of right and wrong in human institutions? When a criminal was justly executed, was not the execution justice

to him who suffered, and humanity to the body of the people at large ?

The noble earl had said, also, that we should do no good by the abolition, because other nations would not concur in it. He did not know what other nations would do ; but this he knew that we ourselves ought not to be unjust because they should refuse to be honest. It was, however, self-obvious that, if we admitted no more slaves into our colonies, the evil would be considerably diminished.

Another of his arguments did not appear to be more solid ; for surely the Slave-trade ought not to be continued, merely because the effect of the abolition might ultimately be that of the emancipation of the slaves ; an event, which would be highly desirable in its due time.

The noble lord had also said that the planters were against the abolition, and that without their consent it could never be accomplished. He differed from him in both these points : for, first, he was a considerable planter himself, and yet he was a friend to the measure : secondly, by cutting off all further supplies, the planters would be obliged to pay more attention to the treatment of their slaves, and this treatment would render the trade unnecessary.

The noble earl had asserted also, that the population in the West Indies could not be kept up without further importations ; and this was the opinion of the planters, who were the best judges of the subject. As a planter he differed from his

lordship again. If indeed all the waste lands were to be brought into cultivation, the present population would be insufficient. But the government had already determined, that the trade should not be continued for such a purpose. We were no longer to continue pirates, or executioners for every petty tyrant in Africa, in order that every holder of a bit of land in our islands might cultivate the whole of his allotment; a work, which might require centuries. Making this exception, he would maintain, that no further importations were necessary. Few or no slaves had been imported into Antigua for many years; and he believed, that even some had been exported from it. As to Jamaica, although in one year fifteen thousand died in consequence of a hurricane and famine, the excess of deaths over the births during the twenty years preceding 1788 was only one per cent. Deducting, however, the mortality of the newly imported slaves, and making the calculation upon the negroes born in the island or upon those who had been long there, he believed the births and the deaths would be found equal. He had a right therefore to argue that the negroes, with better treatment (which the abolition would secure) would not only maintain but increase their population, without any aid from Africa. He would add, that the newly imported Africans brought with them not only disorders, which ravaged the plantations, but danger from the probability of insurrections. He wished most heartily for the total abolition of the trade.

He was convinced, that it was both inhuman, unjust, and impolitic. This had always been his opinion as an individual since he was capable of forming one. It was his opinion then as a legislator. It was his opinion as a colonial proprietor; and it was his opinion as an Englishman, wishing for the prosperity of the British empire.

The earl of Suffolk contended, that the population of the slaves in the islands could be kept up by good treatment, so as to be sufficient for their cultivation. He entered into a detail of calculations from the year 1772 downwards in support of this statement. He believed all the miseries of St. Domingo arose from the vast importations of Africans. He had such a deep sense of the inhumanity and injustice of the Slave-trade, that, if ever he wished any action of his life to be recorded, it would be that of the vote he should then give in support of the resolution.

Lord Sidmouth said, that he agreed to the substance of the resolution, but yet he could not support it. Could he be convinced that the trade would be injurious to the cause of humanity and justice, the question with him would be decided; for policy could not be opposed to humanity and justice. He had been of opinion for the last twenty years, that the interests of the country and those of numerous individuals were so deeply blended with this traffic, that we should be very cautious how we proceeded. With respect to the cultivation of new lands, he would not allow a single negro to be imported for such a purpose;

but he must have a regard to the old plantations. When he found a sufficient increase in the black population to continue the cultivation already established there, then, but not till then, he would agree to an abolition of the trade.

Earl Stanhope said he would not detain their lordships long. He could not however, help expressing his astonishment at what had fallen from the last speaker; for he had evidently confessed that the Slave-trade was inhuman and unjust, and then he had insinuated, that it was neither inhuman nor unjust to continue it. A more paradoxical or whimsical opinion, he believed, was never entertained, or more whimsically expressed in that house. The noble viscount had talked of the interests of the planters: but this was but a part of the subject; for surely the people of Africa were not to be forgotten. He did not understand the practice of complimenting the planters with the lives of men, women, and helpless children by thousands for the sake of their pecuniary advantage; and they, who adopted it, whatever they might think of the consistency of their own conduct, offered an insult to the sacred names of humanity and justice.

The noble earl (Westmoreland) had asked what would be the practical effect of the abolition of the Slave-trade. He would inform him. It would do away the infamous practices, which took place in Africa; it would put an end to the horrors of the passage; it would save many thousands of our fellow-creatures from the miseries of eternal



slavery; it would oblige the planters to treat those better, who were already in that unnatural state; it would increase the population of our islands: it would give a death-blow to the diabolical calculations, whether it was cheaper to work the negroes to death and recruit the gangs by fresh importations, or to work them moderately and to treat them kindly. He knew of no event, which would be attended with so many blessings.

There was but one other matter, which he would notice. The noble baron (Hawkesbury) had asserted, that all the horrors of St. Domingo were the consequence of the speculative opinions, which were current in a neighboring kingdom on the subject of liberty. They had, he said, no such origin. They were owing to two causes; first, to the vast number of negroes recently imported into that island; and, secondly, to a scandalous breach of faith by the French legislature. This legislature held out the idea not only of the abolition of the Slave-trade, but also of all slavery; but it broke its word. It held forth the rights of man to the whole human race, and then, in practice, it most infamously abandoned every article in these rights; so that it became the scorn of all the enlightened and virtuous part of mankind. These were the great causes of the miseries of St. Domingo, and not the speculative opinions of France.

Earl Grosvenor could not but express the joy he felt at the hope, after all his disappointments, that this wicked trade would be done away. He

hoped that his majesty's ministers were in earnest, and that they would, early in the next session, take this great question up with a determination to go through with it; so that another year should not pass, before we extended the justice and humanity of the country to the helpless and unhappy inhabitants of Africa.

Earl Fitzwilliam said he was fearful, lest the calamities of St. Domingo should be brought home to our own islands. We ought not, he thought, too hastily to adopt the resolution on that account. He should therefore support the previous question.

Lord Ellenborough said, he was sorry to differ from his noble friend (lord Sidmouth) and yet he could not help saying that if after twenty years, during which this question had been discussed by both houses of parliament, their lordships' judgments were not ripe for its determination, he could not look with any confidence to a time, when they would be ready to decide it.

The question then before them was short and plain. It was, whether the African Slave-trade was inhuman, unjust, and impolitic. If the premises were true, we could not too speedily bring it to a conclusion.

The subject had been frequently brought before him in a way, which had enabled him to become acquainted with it; and he was the more anxious on that account to deliver his sentiments upon it as a peer of parliament, without reference to any thing he had been called upon to do in the dis-

charge of his professional duty. When he looked at the mode in which this traffic commenced, by the spoliation of the rights of a whole quarter of the globe ; by the misery of whole nations of helpless Africans ; by tearing them from their homes, their families, and their friends ; when he saw the unhappy victims carried away by force ; thrust into a dungeon in the hold of a ship, in which the interval of their passage from their native to a foreign land was filled up with misery, under every degree of debasement, and in chains ; and when he saw them afterwards consigned to an eternal slavery ; he could not but contemplate the whole system with horror. It was inhuman in its beginning, inhuman in its progress, and inhuman to the very end.

Nor was it more inhuman than it was unjust. The noble earl (Westmoreland) in adverting to this part of the question, had considered it as a question, of justice between two nations. But it was a moral question. Although the natives of Africa might be taken by persons authorized by their own laws to take and dispose of them, and the practice therefore might be said to be legal as it respected them, yet no man could doubt, whatever ordinances they might have to sanction it, that it was radically, essentially, and in principle, unjust ; and therefore there could be no excuse for us in continuing it. On the general principle of natural justice, which was paramount to all ordinances of men, it was quite impossible to defend this traffic ; and he agreed with the

noble baron (Hawkesbury) that, having decided that it was inhuman and unjust, we should not inquire whether it was impolitic. Indeed, the inquiry itself would be impious; for it was the common ordinance of God, that, that which was inhuman and unjust, should never be for the good of man. Its impolicy therefore was included in its injustice and its inhumanity. And he had no doubt, when the importations were stopped, that the planters would introduce a change of system among their slaves, which would increase their population, so as to render any further supplies from Africa unnecessary. It had been proved indeed, that the Negro-population in some of the islands was already in this desirable state. Many other happy effects would follow. As to the losses which would arise from the abolition of the Slave-trade, they, who were interested in the continuance of it, had greatly overrated them. When pleading formerly in his professional capacity for the merchants of Liverpool at their lordships' bar, he had often delivered statements, which he had received from them; and which he afterward discovered to be grossly incorrect. He could say from his own knowledge, that the assertion of the noble earl (Westmoreland) that property to the amount of a hundred millions would be endangered was wild and fanciful. He would not, however deny, that some loss might accompany the abolition; but there could be no difficulty in providing for it. Such a consideration

ought not to be allowed to impede their progress in getting rid of a horrible injustice.

But it had been said, that we should do but little in the cause of humanity by abolishing the Slave-trade; because other nations would continue it. He did not believe they would. He knew that America was about to give it up. He believed the states of Europe would give it up. But, supposing that they were all to continue it, would not our honor be the greater? Would not our virtue be the more signal? for then,

—————“faithful we  
Among the faithless found.”—————

to which he would add, that undoubtedly we should diminish the evil, as far as the number of miserable beings was concerned, which was accustomed to be transported to our own colonies.

Earl Spencer agreed with the noble viscount (Sidmouth) that the amelioration of the condition of the slaves was an object which might be effected in the West Indies; but he was certain, that the most effectual way of improving it would be by the total and immediate abolition of the Slave-trade; and for that reason he would support the resolution. Had the resolution held out emancipation to them, it would not have had his assent; for it would have ill become the character of this country, if it had been once promised; to have withheld it from them. It was to such deception that the horrors of St. Domingo were to be attributed. He would not enter into the discussion of the general subject at present. He

was convinced that the trade was what the resolution stated it to be, inhuman, unjust, and impolitic. He wished, therefore, most earnestly indeed, for its abolition. As to the mode of effecting it, it should be such, as would be attended with the least inconvenience to all parties. At the same time he would not allow small inconveniences to stand in the way of the great claims of humanity, justice, and religion.

The question was then put on the resolution, and carried by a majority of forty-one to twenty. The same address also to his majesty, which had been agreed upon by the commons, was directly afterward moved. This also was carried, but without the necessity of a division.

The resolution and the motion having passed both houses, one other parliamentary measure was yet necessary to complete the proceedings of this session. It was now almost universally believed, in consequence of what had already taken place there, that the Slave-trade had received its death-wound; and that it would not long survive it. It was supposed therefore, that the slave-merchants would, in the interim, fit out not only all the vessels they had, but even buy others, to make what might be called their last harvest. Hence extraordinary scenes of rapine, and murder, would be occasioned in Africa. To prevent these a new bill was necessary. This was accordingly introduced into the commons. It enacted, but with one exception, that from and after the first of August 1806, no vessel should

clear out for the Slave-trade, unless it should have been previously employed by the same owner or owners in the said trade, or should be proved to have been contracted for, previously to the tenth of June 1806, for the purpose of being employed in that trade. It may now be sufficient to say that this bill also passed both houses of parliament: soon after which the session ended.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

CONTINUATION FROM JULY, 1806, TO MARCH, 1807—DEATH OF MR. FOX—  
BILL FOR THE TOTAL ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE-TRADE CARRIED IN THE  
HOUSE OF LORDS—SENT FROM THENCE TO THE COMMONS—AMENDED AND  
PASSED THERE—CARRIED BACK, AND PASSED WITH ITS AMENDMENTS BY  
THE LORDS—RECEIVES THE ROYAL ASSENT—REFLECTIONS ON THIS GREAT  
EVENT.

It was impossible for the committee to look back to the proceedings of the last session, as they related to the great question under their care, without feeling a profusion of joy, as well as of gratitude to those, by whose virtuous endeavors they had taken place. But, alas, how few our earthly pleasures come to us without alloy! a melancholy event succeeded. We had the painful intelligence in the month of October, 1806, that one of the oldest and warmest friends of the cause was then numbered with the dead.

Of the character of Mr. Fox, as it related to this cause, I am bound to take notice. And first,

I may observe, that he professed an attachment to it almost as soon as it was ushered into the world. Early in the year 1788, when he was waited upon by a deputation of the committee, his language was, as has appeared in the first volume, "that he would support their object to its fullest extent, being convinced that there was no remedy for the evil but in the total abolition of the trade."

His subsequent conduct evinced the sincerity of his promises. He was constant in his attendance in parliament whenever the question was brought forward; and he never failed to exert his powerful eloquence in its favor. The countenance, indeed, which he gave it, was of the greatest importance to its welfare; for most of his parliamentary friends, who followed his general political sentiments, patronized it also. By the aid of these, joined to that of the private friends of Mr. Pitt, and of other members, who espoused it without reference to party, it was always so upheld, that after the year 1791, no one of the defeats which it sustained, was disgraceful. The majority on the side of those interested in the continuance of the trade was always so trifling, that the abolitionists were preserved a formidable body, and their cause respectable.

I never heard whether Mr. Fox, when he came into power, made any stipulations with his majesty on the subject of the Slave-trade: but this I know, that he determined upon the abolition of it, if it were practicable, as the highest glory of his administration, and as the greatest earthly blessing



which it was in the power of the government to bestow; and that he took considerable pains to convince some of his colleagues in the cabinet of the propriety of the measure.

When the resolution, which produced the debates in parliament, as detailed in the last chapter, was under contemplation, it was thought expedient that Mr. Fox, as the minister of state in the house of commons, should introduce it himself. When applied to for this purpose he cheerfully undertook the office; thus acting in consistency with his public declaration in the year 1791, "that in whatever situation he might ever be, he would use his warmest efforts for the promotion of this righteous cause."

Before the next measure, or the bill to prevent the sailing of any new vessel in the trade after the first of August, was publicly disclosed, it was suggested to him that the session was nearly over; that he might possibly weary both houses by another motion on the subject; and that if he were to lose it, or to experience a diminution of his majorities in either, he might injure the cause, which was then on the road to triumph. To this objection he replied, "that he believed both houses were disposed to get rid of the trade; that his own life was precarious; that if he omitted to serve the injured Africans on this occasion, he might have no other opportunity of doing it; and that he dared not, under these circumstances, neglect so great a duty."

This prediction relative to himself became un-

fortunately verified; for his constitution, after this began to decline, till at length his mortal destiny, in the eyes of his medical attendants, was sealed. But even then, when removed by pain and sickness from the discussion of political subjects, he never forgot this cause. In his own sufferings he was not unmindful of those of the injured Africans. "Two things," said he, on his death-bed, "I wish earnestly to see accomplished—peace with Europe, and the abolition of the Slave-trade." But knowing well that we could much better protect ourselves against our own external enemies, than this helpless people against their oppressors, he added, "but of the two I wish the latter." These sentiments he occasionally repeated, so that the subject was frequently in his thoughts in his last illness. Nay, "the very hope of the abolition (to use the expression of lord Howick in the house of commons) quivered on his lips in the last hour of it." Nor is it improbable, if earthly scenes ever rise to view at that awful crisis, and are perceptible, that it might have occupied his mind in the last moment of his existence. Then, indeed, would joy ineffable, from a conviction of having prepared the way for rescuing millions of human beings from misery, have attended the spirit on its departure from the body; and then, also, would this spirit, most of all purified when in the contemplation of peace, good-will, and charity upon earth, be in the fittest state, on gliding from its earthly cavern, to commix with the endless ocean of benevolence and love.

At length the session of 1807 commenced. It was judged advisable by lord Grenville, that the expected motion on this subject should, contrary to the practice hitherto adopted, be agitated first in the lords. Accordingly, on the second of January he presented a bill, called an act for the abolition of the Slave-trade; but he then proposed only to print it, and to let it lie on the table, that it might be maturely considered, before it should be discussed.

On the fourth no less than four counsel were heard against the bill.

On the fifth the debate commenced. But of this I shall give no detailed account; nor, indeed, of any of those which followed it. The truth is, that the subject has been exhausted. They, who spoke in favor of the abolition, said very little that was new concerning it. They, who spoke against it, brought forward, as usual, nothing but negative and fanciful conjectures. To give, therefore, what was said by both parties at these times, would be but useless repetition.\* To give, on the other hand, that which was said on one side only would appear partial. Hence I shall offer to the reader little more than a narrative of facts upon these occasions.

Lord Grenville opened the debate by a very lu-

\* The different debates in both houses on this occasion would occupy the half of another volume. This is another circumstance, which reconciles me to the omission. But that, which reconciles me the most is, that they will be soon published. In these debates justice has been done to every individual concerned in them.

minous speech. He was supported by the duke of Gloucester, the bishop of Durham (Dr. Barrington), the earls Moira, Selkirk, and Roslyn, and the lords Holland, King, and Hood. The opponents of the bill were the duke of Clarence, the earls Westmoreland and St. Vincent, and the lords Sidmouth, Eldon, and Hawkesbury.

The question being called for at four o'clock in the morning, it appeared that the personal votes and proxies in favor of lord Grenville's motion amounted to one hundred, and those against it to thirty-six. Thus passed the first bill in England, which decreed, that the African Slave-trade should cease. And here I cannot omit paying to his highness, the duke of Gloucester, the tribute of respect which is due to him, for having opposed the example of his royal relations on this subject in behalf of an helpless and oppressed people. The sentiments too, which he delivered on this occasion, ought not to be forgotten. "This trade," said he, "is contrary to the principles of the British constitution. It is, besides, a cruel and criminal traffic in the blood of my fellow-creatures. It is a foul stain on the national character. It is an offence to the Almighty. On every ground, therefore, on which a decision can be made; on the ground of policy, of liberty, of humanity, of justice, but, above all, on the ground of religion, I shall vote for its immediate extinction."

On the tenth of February the bill was carried to the house of commons. On the twentieth counsel were heard against it; after which, by agree-

ment, the second reading of it took place. On the twenty-third, the question being put for the commitment of it, lord viscount Howick (now earl Grey) began an eloquent speech. After he had proceeded in it some way, he begged leave to enter his protest against certain principles of relative justice which had been laid down. "The merchants and planters," said he, "have an undoubted right, in common with other subjects of the realm, to demand justice at our hands. But that which they denominate justice, does not correspond with the legitimate character of that virtue; for they call upon us to violate the rights of others, and to transgress our own moral duties. That which they distinguish as justice, involves in itself the greatest injury to others. It is not, in fact, justice which they demand, but—favor—and favor to themselves at the expense of the most grievous oppression of their fellow-creatures."

He then argued the question upon the ground of policy. He showed by a number of official documents, how little this trade had contributed to the wealth of the nation, being but a fifty-fourth part of its export trade; and he contended that as four-sevenths of it had been cut off by his majesty's proclamation, and the passing of the foreign Slave-bill in a former year, no detriment of any consequence would arise from the present measure.

He entered into an account of the loss of seamen, and of the causes of the mortality, in this trade.

He went largely into the subject of the negro-population in the islands from official documents, giving an account of it up to the latest date. He pointed out the former causes of its diminution, and stated how the remedies for these would follow.

He showed how, even if the quantity of colonial produce should be diminished for a time, this disadvantage would, in a variety of instances, be more than counterbalanced by advantages, which would not only be great in themselves, but permanent.

He then entered into a refutation of the various objections which had been made to the abolition, in an eloquent and perspicuous manner; and concluded by appealing to the great authorities of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox in behalf of the proposed measure. "These precious ornaments," he said, "of their age and country had examined the subject with all the force of their capacious minds. On this question they had dismissed all animosity; all difference of opinion; and had proceeded in union; and he believed, that the best tribute of respect we could show, or the most splendid monument we could raise, to their memories would be by the adoption of the glorious measure of the abolition of the Slave-trade."

Lord Howick was supported by Mr. Roscoe, who was then one of the members for Liverpool; by Mr. Lushington, Mr. Fawkes, lord Mahon, lord Milton, sir John Doyle, sir Samuel Romilly, Mr. Wilberforce, and earl Percy, the latter of whom wished that a clause might be put into

the bill, by which all the children of slaves, born after January 1810, should be made free. General Gascoyne and Mr. Hibbert opposed the bill. Mr. Manning hoped that compensation would be made to the planters in case of loss. Mr. Bathurst and Mr. Hiley Addington preferred a plan for gradual abolition to the present mode. These having spoken, it appeared on a division, that there were for the question two hundred and eighty-three, and against it only sixteen.

Of this majority I cannot but remark, that it was probably the largest that was ever announced on any occasion, where the house was called upon to divide. I must observe also, that there was such an enthusiasm among the members at this time, that there appeared to be the same kind and degree of feeling, as manifested itself within the same walls in the year 1788, when the question was first started. This enthusiasm too, which was of a moral nature, was so powerful, that it seemed even to extend to a conversion of the heart: for several of the old opponents of this righteous cause went away, unable to vote against it; while others of them staid in their places, and voted in its favor.

On the twenty-seventh of February lord Howick moved, that the house resolve itself into a committee on the bill for the abolition of the Slave-trade. Sir C. Pole, Mr. Hughan, Brown, Bathurst, Windham, and Fuller opposed the motion; and sir R. Milbank, and Mr. Wayne, Barham, Courtenay, Montague, Jacob, Whitbread,

and Herbert (of Kerry) supported it. At length the committee was allowed to sit *pro forma*, and Mr. Hobhouse was put into the chair. The bill then went through it, and, the house being resumed, the report was received and read.

On the sixth of March, when the committee sat again, sir C. Pole moved, that the year 1812 be substituted for the year 1807, as the time when the trade should be abolished. This amendment produced a long debate, which was carried on by sir C. Pole, Mr. Fuller, Hiley Addington, Rose, Gascoyne, and Bathurst, on one side; and by Mr. Ward, sir P. Francis, general Vyse, sir T. Turton, Mr. Whitbread, lord Henry Petty, Mr. Canning, Stanhope, Perceval, and Wilberforce on the other. At length, on a division, there appeared to be one hundred and twenty-five against the amendment, and for it only seventeen. The chairman then read the bill, and it was agreed that he should report it with the amendments on Monday. The bill enacted, that no vessel should clear out for slaves from any port within the British dominions after the first of May, 1807, and that no slave should be landed in the colonies after the first of March, 1808.

On the sixteenth of March, on the motion of lord Henry Petty, the question was put, that the bill be read a third time. Mr. Hibbert, captain Herbert, T. W. Plomer, Mr. Windham, and lord Castlereagh, spoke against the motion. Sir P. Francis, Mr. Lyttleton, Mr. H. Thornton, and Mr. Barham, Sheridan, and Wilberforce support-



ed it. After this the bill was passed without a division.\*

On Wednesday, the eighteenth, lord Howick, accompanied by Mr. Wilberforce and others, carried the bill to the lords. Lord Grenville, on receiving it, moved that it should be printed, and that, if this process could be finished by Monday, it should be taken into consideration on that day. The reason of this extraordinary haste was, that his majesty, displeased with the introduction of the Roman Catholic officers' bill into the commons, had signified his intention to the members of the existing administration, that they were to be displaced.

The uneasiness, which a few days before, had sprung up among the friends of the abolition, on the report that this event was probable, began now to show itself throughout the kingdom. Letters were written from various parts, manifesting the greatest fear and anxiety on account of the state of the bill, and desiring answers of consolation. Nor was this state of the mind otherwise than what might have been expected upon such an occasion; for the bill was yet to be printed. Being an amended one, it was to be argued again in the lords. It was then to receive the royal assent. All these operations implied time; and it was reported that the new ministry† was formed;

\* S. Lushington, esq. M. P. for Yarmouth, gave his voluntary attendance and assistance to the Committee, during all these motions, and J. Bowdler, esquire, was elected a member of it.

† The only circumstance, which afforded comfort at this time,

among whom were several, who had shown a hostile disposition to the cause.

On Monday, the twenty-third, the house of lords met. Such extraordinary diligence had been used in printing the bill, that it was then ready. Lord Grenville immediately brought it forward. The earl of Westmoreland and the marquis of Sligo opposed it. The duke of Norfolk and the bishop of Llandaff (Dr. Watson) supported it. The latter said, that this great act of justice would be recorded in heaven. The amendments were severally adopted without a division. But here an omission of three words was discovered, namely, "country, territory, or place," which, if not rectified, might defeat the purposes of the bill. An amendment was immediately proposed and carried. Thus the bill received the last sanction of the peers. Lord Grenville then congratulated the house on the completion, on its part, of the most glorious measure, that had ever been adopted by any legislative body in the world.

The amendment, now mentioned, occasioned the bill to be sent back to the commons. On the twenty-fourth, on the motion of lord Howick, it was immediately taken into consideration there, and agreed to; and it was carried back to the lords, as approved of, on the same day.

But though the bill had now passed both houses, there was an awful fear throughout the was that the honorable Spencer Perceval and Mr. Canning were included in it, who were warm patrons of this great measure.

kingdom; lest it should not receive the royal assent before the ministry was dissolved. This event took place the next day; for on Wednesday the twenty-fifth, at half past eleven in the morning, his majesty's message was delivered to the different members of it, that they were then to wait upon him to deliver up the seals of their offices. It then appeared that a commission for the royal assent to the bill among others had been obtained. This commission was instantly opened by the lord chancellor (Erskine) who was accompanied by the lords Holland and Auckland; and as the clock struck twelve, just when the sun was in its meridian splendor to witness this august act, this establishment of a Magna Charta for Africa in Britain, and to sanction it by its most vivid and glorious beams, it was completed. The ceremony being over, the seals of the respective offices were delivered up; so that the execution of this commission was the last act of the administration of lord Grenville; an administration, which, on account of its virtuous exertions in behalf of the oppressed African race, will pass to posterity, living through successive generations, in the love and gratitude of the most virtuous of mankind.

Thus ended one of the most glorious contests, after a continuance for twenty years, of any ever carried on in any age or country. A contest, not of brutal violence, but of reason. A contest between those, who felt deeply for the happiness and the honor of their fellow-creatures, and those,

who, through vicious custom and the impulse of avarice, had trampled under foot the sacred rights of their nature, and had even attempted to efface all title to the divine image from their minds.

Of the immense advantages of this contest I know not how to speak. Indeed, the very agitation of the question, which it involved, has been highly important. Never was the heart of man so expanded. Never were its generous sympathies so generally and so perseveringly excited. These sympathies, thus called into existence, have been useful in the preservation of a national virtue. For any thing we know, they may have contributed greatly to form a counteracting balance against the malignant spirit, generated by our almost incessant wars during this period, so as to have preserved us from barbarism.

It has been useful also in the discrimination of moral character. In private life it has enabled us to distinguish the virtuous from the more vicious part of the community.\* It has shown

\* I have had occasion to know many thousand persons in the course of my travels on this subject; and I can truly say, that the part which these took on this great question, was always a true criterion of their moral character. Some indeed opposed the abolition, who seemed to be so respectable, that it was difficult to account for their conduct; but it invariably turned out in a course of time, either that they had been influenced by interested motives, or that they were not men of steady moral principle. In the year 1792, when the national enthusiasm was so great, the good were as distinguishable from the bad, according to their disposition to this great cause, as if the Divine Being had marked them; or as a friend of mine the other day observed, as we may suppose the sheep to be from the goats on the day of judgment.

the general philanthropist. It has unmasked the vicious in spite of his pretension to virtue. It has afforded us the same knowledge in public life. It has separated the moral statesman from the wicked politician. It has shown us who, in the legislative and executive offices of our country are fit to save, and who to destroy a nation.

It has furnished us also with important lessons. It has proved what a creature man is! how devoted he is to his own interest! to what a length of atrocity he can go, unless fortified by religious principle! But as if this part of the prospect would be too afflicting, it has proved to us, on the other hand, what a glorious instrument he may become in the hands of his Maker; and that a little virtue, when properly leavened, is made capable of counteracting the effects of a mass of vice!

With respect to the end obtained by this contest, or the great measure of the abolition of the Slave-trade as it has now passed, I know not how to appreciate its importance. To our own country, indeed, it is invaluable. We have lived, in consequence of it, to see the day, when it has been recorded as a principle in our legislation; that commerce itself shall have its moral boundaries. We have lived to see the day, when we are likely to be delivered from the contagion of the most barbarous opinions. They, who supported this wicked traffic, virtually denied, that man was a moral being. They substituted the law of force for the law of reason. But the great

Act now under our consideration, has banished the impious doctrine, and restored the rational creature to his moral rights. Nor is it a matter of less pleasing consideration, that, at this awful crisis, when the constitutions of kingdoms are on the point of dissolution, the stain of the blood of Africa is no longer upon us, or that we have been freed (alas, if it be not too late!) from a load of guilt, which has hung like a mill-stone about our necks, ready to sink us to perdition.

In tracing the measure still further, or as it will affect other lands, we become only the more sensible of its importance: for can we pass over to Africa; can we pass over to the numerous islands, the receptacles of miserable beings from thence; and can we call to mind the scenes of misery, which have been passing in each of these regions of the earth, without acknowledging, that one of the greatest sources of suffering to the human race has, as far as our own power extends, been done away? Can we pass over to these regions again, and contemplate the multitude of crimes, which the agency necessary for keeping up the barbarous system produced, without acknowledging, that a source of the most monstrous and extensive wickedness has been removed also? But here, indeed, it becomes us peculiarly to rejoice; for though nature shrinks from pain, and compassion is engendered in us when we see it become the portion of others, yet what is physical suffering compared with moral guilt? The misery of the oppressed is, in the first place, not conta-

gious like the crime of the oppressor. Nor is the mischief, which it generates, either so frightful or so pernicious. The body, though under affliction, may retain its shape; and, if it even perish, what is the loss of it but of worthless dust? But when the moral springs of the mind are poisoned, we lose the most excellent part of the constitution of our nature, and the divine image is no longer perceptible in us. Nor are the two evils of similar duration. By a decree of Providence, for which we cannot be too thankful, we are made mortal. Hence the torments of the oppressor are but temporary; whereas the immortal part of us, when once corrupted, may carry its pollutions with it into another world.

But independently of the quantity of physical suffering and the innumerable avenues to vice in more than a quarter of the globe, which this great measure will cut off, there are yet blessings, which we have reason to consider as likely to flow from it. Among these we cannot overlook the great probability, that Africa, now freed from the vicious and barbarous effects of this traffic, may be in a better state to comprehend and receive the sublime truths of the Christian religion. Nor can we overlook the probability, that, a new system of treatment necessarily springing up in our islands, the same bright sun of consolation may visit her children there. But here a new hope rises to our view. Who knows but that emancipation, like a beautiful plant, may, in its due season, rise out of the ashes of the

abolition of the Slave-trade, and that, when its own intrinsic value shall be known, the seed of it may be planted in other lands! And looking at the subject in this point of view, we cannot but be struck with the wonderful concurrence of events as previously necessary for this purpose, namely, that two nations, England and America, the mother and the child, should, in the same month of the same year, have abolished this impious traffic; nations, which at this moment have more than a million of subjects within their jurisdiction to partake of the blessing; and one of which, on account of her local situation and increasing power, is likely in time to give, if not law, at least a tone to the manners and customs of the great continent, on which she is situated.

Reader! Thou art now acquainted with the history of this contest! Rejoice in the manner of its termination! And, if thou feelest grateful for the event, retire within thy closet, and pour out thy thanksgivings to the Almighty for this his unspeakable act of mercy to thy oppressed fellow creatures.

END OF VOL. III.