

AN
ADDRESS
TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE NEW PARLIAMENT,
ON THE
PROCEEDINGS OF THE COLONIAL DEPARTMENT,
IN FURTHERANCE OF THE
RESOLUTIONS OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS OF THE 15th MAY 1823,

*“ For Ameliorating the Condition of the Slave Population in
His Majesty’s Colonies ;”*

AND ON THE
ONLY COURSE THAT OUGHT NOW TO BE PURSUED BY HIS
MAJESTY’S GOVERNMENT.

SECOND EDITION.

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AMONG the subjects which will engage your early attention, there is not one of paramount importance to “ the West Indian question,” of which Mr. Canning has said:—“ To speak of the difficulties “ which encompass it, as compared with almost any “ other question which has *ever* occupied the atten- “ tion of parliament, would be to draw but a faint “ and feeble picture of those difficulties ; they are, “ indeed, apparent to the most casual observation ; “ but he who has to probe and prove them, for the “ purpose of applying a remedy, finds them thicken- “ ing around him at every step, and leaving him fre- “ quently nothing but a choice of evils.” With such a description, by a statesman so eminent as Mr. Canning, I hope I shall stand excused for submitting to your notice a brief explanation and impartial review of the proceedings of the Colonial Department in Downing-Street, in furtherance of the resolutions of the House of Commons, of the 15th May 1823 *,

* 1st. “ That it is expedient to adopt effectual and decisive measures for ameliorating the condition of the slave population in his Majesty’s colonies.

2d. “ That through a determined and persevering, but at the same time judicious and temperate, enforcement of such measures, this House looks forward to a progressive improvement in the character of the slave population, such as may prepare them for a participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty’s subjects.

3d. “ That this House is anxious for the accomplishment of this purpose, at the earliest period that shall be compatible with the well-being of the slaves themselves, with the safety of the colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private property.”

with observations on the only course *now* open to you, “ compatible with the well-being of the slaves themselves, with the safety of the colonies, and “ with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private property.”

You will find on your tables “ Papers in explanation of the measures adopted by his Majesty’s government for the amelioration of the condition of the slave population in his Majesty’s dominions in the West Indies :” to these “ papers” I have to solicit your particular attention. The anti-slavery and West India parties have both expressed their dissatisfaction with them, but for very opposite reasons—the one complains of his Majesty’s government for having proceeded too slowly, while the other objects to the rapidity of the movements : that both complaints should be well founded may appear paradoxical, yet it will probably be seen that neither is without foundation, and that by moving more slowly the progress might have been greater.

The question is avowedly encompassed by difficulties, and therefore it might have been expected that the most deliberate investigation would have preceded any attempt at legislation. This question, however, which Mr. Canning thought “ great and difficult beyond example ; one almost beyond the power of man,” “ the recasting as it were, of a whole generation of mankind,” was undertaken by the Colonial Department, to which it more especially belonged, with an apparent innocence of all consciousness of its importance or difficulty. Earl Bathurst did not deem it necessary to “ probe and prove,” and therefore avoided the misfortune of finding difficulties “ thickening around him at every step.” His lordship went to work as if he had been dealing with a common-place every-day question. On the 28th of May 1823, not a fortnight after the resolutions of the House of Commons, Lord Bathurst made his first communication to the colonies by furnishing each governor with a copy of the resolutions of the House

of Commons, and the "best report" his lordship could procure of Mr. Canning's speech on proposing the resolutions. He announced two of the measures on which his Majesty's government had determined: the governor of Demerara was requested to submit them to the Court of Policy for adoption, to render his Majesty's commands unnecessary: those other colonies which had not* independent local legislatures were informed that they must be enforced, and the governors of colonies having independent local legislatures were instructed to recommend similar measures to the respective legislatures. In another fortnight (12th June 1823) Lord Bathurst again addressed the governors of colonies *having local legislatures*, and said, "I am not as yet prepared to communicate to you the definitive *instructions* which his Majesty's government *will issue*, with respect to the immediate measures for the improvement of the condition of the slave population necessary to be *enforced* by the colonial legislatures at their *next meeting*." In less than a month thereafter (9th July 1823), and within two months of the passing of the resolutions of the House of Commons, Lord Bathurst again addressed these governors, the governors of colonies HAVING LOCAL LEGISLATURES, in a circular occupying six printed folio pages, and detailing the measures to be adopted. His lordship writes, "the suggestions which I am about to make are *not* to be understood as affording a full development of what his Majesty's government have in contempla-

* "The Colonies are divided into two classes; one of which (the smaller number †) are governed by the crown, without the intervention of local legislative assemblies; the other, and larger class, have legislative assemblies framed in miniature, after the model of those of the mother country. As such assemblies are not a little jealous of the rights and privileges by the possession of which they resemble the institutions of the parent state, the colonies of the first class are much more easily manageable."

Mr. Canning.

† Demerara, Berbice, Trinidad, and St. Lucia.

"tion on this important subject; it is my purpose
 "rather to point out such changes in the laws as may
 "be conveniently adopted at present."—"You will
 "be attentive to have the necessary laws framed,
 "with such precaution and foresight as, if possible,
 "to provide an effectual security for the faithful ob-
 "servance of them. To this end you will consult
 "with the legal advisers of the crown, on the frame
 "of the necessary bills, and you will, from time to
 "time, communicate with me upon the progress you
 "make in this work, or on the difficulties which may
 "obstruct its completion, and if (what I am unwill-
 "ling to imagine) you should meet with any serious
 "opposition, you will lose no time in transmitting to
 "me the necessary communication, in order that I
 "*may take the earliest opportunity of laying the*
 "*matter before parliament, and submitting to their*
 "*consideration such measures as it may be fit to*
 "*adopt in consequence."* A copy of this circular was
 transmitted to each of the colonies not having inde-
 pendent local legislatures. The governors of Deme-
 rara and Berbice were to submit the measures to the
 courts in these colonies, to be applied in the way best
 suited to the "existing laws and usages," preserving
 the entire spirit. The governors of Trinidad and St.
 Lucia were informed that orders in council would be
 prepared for their islands. Accordingly, on the 25th
 of March 1824, Lord Bathurst forwarded to the
 governor of Trinidad an order in council for that
 island, consisting of forty-three clauses, filling fifteen
 pages of the folio printed papers on your tables, and
 involving in its "enactments obligations affecting the
 "most ordinary transactions of life." The governor
 was enjoined to proclaim the order as soon as re-
 ceived, to be in operation in one month from the date
 of the proclamation. A copy of this order in council
 was transmitted to each of the other governors of
 colonies not having local legislatures, to be adapted
 to the laws of these colonies. The governors of colo-
 nies having independent legislatures were at the same

time furnished with copies, and Lord Bathurst expressed the expectation of his Majesty's government that the provisions thereof would be adopted, and his lordship appeared to wish it to be understood that the "order in council" contained the "whole of the measures which his Majesty's government had in contemplation for the amelioration of the state of the slave population."

Having introduced the "Order in Council," it is proper that I should give some account of it. When the governor of Trinidad received it he informed Lord Bathurst that he was "both ready and willing to promote his Majesty's service to the utmost of his power," but that many parts of the order were of such "doubtful interpretation," that he would require explanations. The "order," however, was proclaimed on the 24th of May 1824, but in two days the governor was obliged to apply to Lord Bathurst for further information. On the 3d of June the governor was compelled to address Lord Bathurst a third time on points requiring explanation or alteration. When his lordship's explanations of the first objections started by the governor were received, they were so incomplete and unsatisfactory that the governor was under the necessity of pressing for further explanations and alterations. Indeed, so early as September, (almost as soon as the commencement of the operation of the "order" could be known in this country), Lord Bathurst was obliged to have recourse to another "order in council," to "remove doubts and to meet difficulties," as his lordship expresses himself to the governor. In the same month the chief judge of the island felt so much perplexed and embarrassed by the ambiguous wording and apparent inconsistencies of the order in council, that he addressed the governor on the subject, but the governor could afford no relief or assistance! As a specimen of the legislation of the order in council, I shall adduce some correspondence on one clause, namely, the forty-second. The governor's letter to Lord

Bathurst, of the 7th May, says, "The forty-second clause, however, is that which has really created great consternation, as it confiscates to the crown all the slaves of any person, twice convicted of inflicting upon any slave, *any cruel or unlawful* punishment under the 'order,' to the prejudice of his family, and without reservation in favour of his creditors, and when your lordship considers that persons are now for the first time forbidden to strike any female slave, that this class is allowed by all to be the most prone to give offence, and that it will become even more difficult than at present to restrain them, from their knowledge that their master cannot punish them, as he was accustomed to do, your lordship will, I think, be disposed to make *some allowance for the infirmities of human nature, and at least save the family of the offender*, from that ruin which might fall on them in consequence of an intemperate action of his own." In a subsequent letter he says, of the forty-second clause, "The whole population are unanimous in their complaint against the severity of it." Lord Bathurst replies, "The forfeiture of slaves upon a second conviction for an *unlawful* punishment is, EXPRESSLY left to the '*discretion of the court*,' and therefore would not be enforced except in extreme cases. It is also to be observed that the forfeiture is to the benefit of the crown, and therefore would not be enforced unless the offence were of a very grave and serious character. In order, however, to allay an apprehension which may be entertained of a harsh exercise of this enactment, I have to direct that the penalty on the second conviction shall never be enforced until the whole case has been referred home for the consideration of his Majesty." The following is the rejoinder of the governor, on finding that his lordship had not paid him the compliment of even reading the clause complained of! "I humbly beg leave to observe, that the discretion vested in the court, *to which*

“ *your lordship adverts, is confined to the first offence,*
 “ *and that for the second the forfeiture of ALL the*
 “ *slaves of any unfortunate offender is declared AB-*
 “ *SOLUTE.*” That his lordship might be without any
 means of escape the chief judge of the island says,
 “ Neither is the right of prosecution for enforcement
 “ of the penalty limited to the crown prosecutor. By
 “ the express letter of the law it is competent to any
 “ individual in the community to institute such a pro-
 “ secution, and the judgment for the penalty and for-
 “ feiture in case of a second offence must follow the
 “ conviction under the law, and as by the order in
 “ council of the 16th September 1822, *no appeal is*
 “ *admissible in criminal cases, except in cases of*
 “ *condemnation to death, I am at a loss to ascertain*
 “ *by what means the judgment can be reserved or*
 “ *suspended, at least as far as the penalty extends.*”
 Well might Mr. Brougham exclaim, in his spirited
 work on colonial policy, “ any parliament, council,
 “ or senate, which should begin such a work (legis-
 “ lating for colonies) would find it necessary to give
 “ up legislating for the mother country, in order
 “ partly to mar and partly to neglect the legislation
 “ of the colonies. Let this branch of the imperial
 “ administration, then, be left to the care of those
 “ who are themselves most immediately interested in
 “ the good order and government of those distant
 “ provinces, and whose knowledge of local circum-
 “ stances (*of things which cannot be written down in*
 “ *reports, nor told by witnesses*), is more full and
 “ practical.”

The inconvenience and injustice of such legisla-
 tion have been well expressed by the inhabitants
 of Trinidad, in a memorial to the governor: they
 say, “ Your memorialists humbly contend that they
 “ are placed in singular and extraordinary circum-
 “ stances, without precedent in the annals of legisla-
 “ tion for British subjects: laws for their govern-
 “ ment are universally understood to be framed by
 “ their representatives, whose properties and persons

“ they are to affect equally with the rest of the community. Such laws are called for by the previous necessity of the case ; their want has been felt ; their meaning and intention understood previous to promulgation, and should an occasional error creep into the wording or expression of such meaning, it can be discovered and remedied on the spot without delay.”

The Court of Policy, in Demerara, had evinced such a strong desire to meet the wishes of his Majesty's government, that Lord Bathurst felt himself called upon to declare that “ they had done themselves much honour,” and that they had “ his Majesty's approbation for their zeal and assiduity manifested in giving effect to his royal intentions, and the wishes of parliament in favour of the slave population.” Yet with all this zeal, of the sincerity of which there are abundant proofs in the papers on your tables, the court found it to be impossible to reconcile some of the provisions of the order in council to the laws and usages of Demerara. For instance, by the Spanish law, which is the law of Trinidad, a slave has a right to purchase his freedom against the consent of his master ; the Trinidad order in council is framed accordingly ; but when the Court of Policy in Demerara were requested to originate a similar law, they at once said it was beyond their power ; that they had not the right to invade the property of their fellow colonists by admitting that they could be in any manner deprived of it contrary to the law by which it was secured to them, and which his Majesty had been graciously pleased to guaranty by the articles of capitulation on which the colony had surrendered to his Majesty's arms ; that the difference between the Spanish law in Trinidad and the Dutch law in Demerara was great ; that the Trinidad order in council had not affected the principle of the Spanish law, which allowed a slave to enfranchise himself by purchase, whereas the Dutch law gave no such right, the interest of an

owner in his slave being that of fee simple absolute, whilst the purchaser of a slave in Trinidad knew beforehand that he could only acquire a precarious title depending on the ability of the slave to purchase, but that, in short, let the Spanish law be what it might, it could never alter the right of property in Demerara. After thus contending for the rights of the slave-owner, the court pointed out some of the ruinous effects which might be anticipated from such an alteration of the law, as the non-importation of slaves would render it impossible to replace those manumitted. Lord Bathurst replied, that the arguments of the Court of Policy had received all the consideration which their importance deserved, but that his lordship did not consider that they were such as would justify the abandonment of the principle which led to the recommendation of that particular enactment. The Court rejoined, that it would not be respectful to his Majesty's government to enter into a discussion with Earl Bathurst, but that with all deference, the opinion of the Court remained unshaken, and therefore that the Court could not conscientiously proceed farther, notwithstanding an anxious wish to meet to the fullest extent the wishes of his Majesty's government. This respectful representation his lordship answered on the 25th Feb. last, like a soldier who had received orders which he was to execute, leaving responsibility of consequences to those from whom his orders were derived. "I now, *for the last time*, bring these regulations under the consideration of the Court, with no other alternative, in the event of their declining to admit them, than that of my humbly submitting to his Majesty the expediency of exacting them by direct royal authority." It is clear that the noble Secretary considers the execution of what he intimates to be within his orders. I beg, however, to suggest to his lordship, that even a Military officer is not entirely free from responsibility; that before he gives the word "fire," against

his countrymen, he ought to be satisfied that he is not acting under questionable authority ; that he knows the true import of the commands he has received, and that he is justified by the necessity of the case. If the last position be not apparent, the legal acquittal of a court martial, on the score of not having exceeded orders, would not screen him from public condemnation. Let us apply a similar test to his lordship's proceedings, and see whether he will be entitled to a general acquittal.

In his lordship's despatches, he pleads the authority of "parliament," the recommendations of the "principal planters resident in this country," and the "general approbation of the country." Does one of his Majesty's principal secretaries of state call resolutions of the House of Commons the sanction of parliament? To the House of Lords the resolutions were not submitted until the 7th of March last, when the Lord Chancellor said, "Now, with regard to the communicating to your lordships these resolutions, at so late a period after their being passed elsewhere, I will take the liberty of saying, that I cannot help thinking it would be an infinitely better plan to go upon generally, that when either house of parliament adopts resolutions or measures of an *important character, affecting great political or PRIVATE RIGHTS*, it should *forthwith* communicate such measures or resolutions to the other house of parliament." Here is the highest law authority of the kingdom against his lordship ; but, without dwelling upon what some may think a matter of form, I maintain that it would have been equally incorrect to have asserted that his lordship's measures had the approbation even of the House of Commons, as the resolutions of that house could not be tortured into an approbation of enactments not then framed ! With respect to the recommendations of the "principal planters resident in this country," his lordship is equally unfortunate, for they disavow any such sweep-

ing recommendations as are ascribed to them, never having hinted a single measure approximating to that which has been designated "compulsory manumission;" and any recommendation of interference with the local legislatures they totally disclaim. As to the opinion of the country, it is obvious that, as no evidence was before the country, there could be no opinion sufficiently strong to sanction the act of a secretary of state.

A little consideration will suffice to shew that what his lordship has been pleased to denominate the "general approbation of the country," he ought to have held in the same estimation as a verdict that he knew had been obtained on false evidence. The excitement spread throughout the country was produced by a party that had avowed by their organ that they could do any thing with government * "by saving "them the trouble of thinking;" and what could be a more powerful auxiliary to the views of that party than raising an excitement to make it appear that the country was on their side. To some of the means employed, I beg to crave your attention. Persons residing in the West Indies were invited to furnish information; and, to remove all restraint, it was proclaimed, through the *Edinburgh Review* and other publications, that secrecy should be observed. The publishers of the *Edinburgh Review*, the *African Institution*, and the secretary, Mr. Macaulay, were all declared to be willing to receive communications on such terms: as might be expected, these three open mouths (like those of Venice) were soon most plentifully supplied. Whilst the appetites were fresh, nothing came amiss. The public was served with some strange dishes. Imaginary dialogues, which had appeared in a Barbadoes newspaper forty years

* "I have no doubt that Government will be disposed to adopt "almost any plan which we may propose to them, with respect to "Africa, *provided we will but save them the trouble of thinking.* "This you will see to be highly important."—*Mr. Macaulay to the Duke of Gloucester.*

ago, were presented as *real and new*. The tenth report of the African Institution contained an account of a female slave barbarously treated, during her pregnancy, by an aid-de-camp of Sir James Leith, which was said to be such a common occurrence, that the grand jury would not entertain a bill against him for cruelty. This was in the character of the Barbadoes newspaper fictions, and probably proceeded from a lively imagination inflamed by the heat of the climate; but Sir James Leith being only a plain soldier, had no relish for such wit, and denounced the fiction "a calumny without a shadow of foundation," got up by "some incorrigible dupe or unconscionable knave." A British judge and jury were asked their opinion, and, strange to say, they proved to be as devoid of taste as Sir James Leith. The judge said it was "a wicked calumny," which had "originated in wilful and wicked fabrication;" and the verdict of the jury spoke no less intelligibly. As these opinions did not evince a sufficient sense of the author's merit, he did not court publicity, by claiming the honours of authorship; and the three mouths required so much food, that they did not venture to run the risk of having any part of their future supplies cut off by disclosing even one of the channels from whence they derived their sustenance. Their prudence was rewarded, for so far from being in danger of famine, they had more to fear from repletion. They were in danger of losing their lives, as many children in the West Indies have done, from over-feeding. The three mouths kept the public constantly supplied with dishes adapted to every taste*. The reputed crimes of half a century were fresh dressed, and palmed upon the public as new. The colonists were described as "unrelentingly cruel;" a

* "I need not dwell on the temper and colour of this document—† of Messrs. Wray and others, manufactured, as it appears, in England."—*Governor of Berbice to Lord Bathurst.*

† A Description of the State of Berbice, furnished by the Rev. Mr. Wray and others in Berbice, to Mr. Macaulay.

“white mob, white oppressors,” and “white savages;” persons to whom the “foulest exhalations” of a slave-ship were “fragrance,” and the “deepest groans music;” persons who counted their profits “per poll “in the West Indian shambles;” persons whose laws were “expressed in the language of insult, and “in characters of blood.” With such descriptions, by individuals holding a respectable rank in society, it is not surprising that the Edinburgh Review should have looked forward as it did to the destruction of the “white savages” with rejoicing*. The religious and political feelings of the country were worked on by the declaration that the “state of “slavery is repugnant to the principles of the British “constitution †, and of the Christian religion.” In short, every engine was employed to rouse the people to an universal expression of abhorrence of every thing bearing the name of slavery. The “important engine ‡,” once in motion, soon manufactured petitions for every part of the country, and the tables of both houses of parliament were loaded with them. So far from dignifying the feeling produced by such unworthy means as the opinion of the country, Lord Bathurst ought to have said to the petitioners,

* “If the work is not done, the negroes will do it themselves, “and the *bulk* of their fellow subjects will *rejoice* that it is done, *however deplorable the consequence may be.*”—*Edinburgh Review.*

† “With respect to a state of slavery being contrary to the “spirit of the British constitution, I must say, my lords, that when “I find this system was fostered, encouraged, and almost instituted “by the British Constitution, and I might add under the auspices too “of so great a constitutional authority as my Lord Somers, I should “hesitate a long while before I ventured to say that slavery was contrary to the genius of the British constitution.”—*Lord Chancellor’s Speech, House of Lords.*

‡ “A word in private respecting the African Institution. I cannot help regarding it as an *important engine.* We have many “zealous friends in it, high in rank and influence. Indeed, in all the “OSTENSIBLE letters you write, whether to Lord Castlereagh, the “African Institution, or myself, it will be right to consider the *effect* “of what you say on luke-warm friends, and in the hands of secret “enemies, for such will unavoidably mix with us.”—*Private Letter from Mr. Macaulay to T. Ludlam, Esq.*

“ that he had great pleasure in assuring them that
 “ the statements to which their petitions owed their
 “ origin were gross exaggerations ; that he was fully
 “ justified in giving this assurance by the information
 “ derived from those most entitled to credit—namely,
 “ the men of high rank and honour who had acted as
 “ governors, or held military and naval commands ;
 “ that the depravity of human nature was, however,
 “ too deeply implanted to permit him to expect that a
 “ passage across the Atlantic should change the very
 “ nature of his countrymen, and free them from all
 “ imperfection on landing in the West Indies, and
 “ therefore there might be amongst them persons of
 “ vitiated taste, to whose olfactory nerves ‘ the foul-
 “ est exhalations’ might be ‘ fragrance,’ and to whom
 “ the ‘ deepest groans’ might be sublime ‘ music,’
 “ but that, when such persons might attempt to gra-
 “ tify their tastes at the expense of the negroes, every
 “ endeavour should be used to bring them to punish-
 “ ment to the utmost extent of the law, and that, if
 “ the laws did not authorize punishment proportioned
 “ to the offence, such representations should be made
 “ to the local legislatures as could not fail to effect
 “ the necessary alterations in the laws. Nay, further,
 “ that his lordship should institute an investigation
 “ of the colonial codes generally, and point out the
 “ changes which might be safely and wisely in-
 “ troduced, but that the whole fabric of colonial
 “ society rested on a foundation so different from that
 “ of the mother country, that the greatest delicacy
 “ and circumspection would be necessary ; that what
 “ might be theoretically unjust, might be practically
 “ indispensable ; and, indeed, that the fullest in-
 “ formation that could reach this country must be
 “ imperfect, compared with that possessed by the
 “ colonists, which was more than could be ‘ written
 “ down in reports,’ or ‘ told by witnesses.’ That
 “ many of the laws in the colonies, as well as in this
 “ country, might be expressed in characters of blood,
 “ but that it did not follow that they were executed in

“ the spirit of ‘ blood.’ That were the character of
 “ this country to be judged by some of its laws,
 “ Englishmen would be held in abhorrence, and as in
 “ a state of gross barbarism ; that the petitioners
 “ might be assured that the barbarous laws, and the
 “ practice of the country, did not differ more in
 “ England than in the colonies ; yet, that as it was fit
 “ that laws inapplicable to the present state of society
 “ should be repealed, his lordship could not doubt that
 “ the local legislatures would cheerfully undertake
 “ the task, indeed that several of them were actually
 “ employed in revising their slave codes ; that the
 “ petitioners ought to be reminded, that every law
 “ now in force in the colonies, had received the
 “ sanction of the king through responsible ministers.
 “ That, with regard to slavery being repugnant to the
 “ principles of the Christian religion, it was a bold
 “ assertion in the face of the fact that the Christian
 “ religion and slavery ‘ had co-existed from the very
 “ dawn of Christianity to the present day.’ That
 “ the petitioners ought to take care not to attempt to
 “ destroy what they might think contrary to the Chris-
 “ tian religion in a way not consonant to that religion ;
 “ that they must take care not to condemn their
 “ brethren on false or doubtful testimony ; and, above
 “ all, that they must take care not to give a death-
 “ blow to the ‘ spirit of the British constitution,’ by
 “ trifling with rights guaranteed with all the solemnity
 “ of which that constitution was susceptible.” His
 lordship might have added, that, before the petitioners
 could even speak of emancipation, they ought to
 provide an ample fund to indemnify the planters.

I trust I have succeeded in establishing that Lord
 Bathurst was not justified in claiming for his measures
 the authority of parliament, the country, or the prin-
 cipal planters resident in this country.

I now invite your particular attention to his lord-
 ship’s instructions. Mr. Canning has embodied them
 in the following sentences :—“ His Majesty’s minis-
 “ ters should consider not only what may be right in

“ theory but what will be wise in practice ; not only “ how to do the greatest possible good, but how to do it “ with the least possible mischief.” He points out the planters as the only persons through whose instrumentality the good can be effected*. The object and manner of accomplishing it are here laid down, and ought to be borne in mind throughout the examination of the conduct of the Colonial Department. It is impossible to do justice to Lord Bathurst without reverting to the situation and feelings of the planters at the date of the resolutions of the House of Commons. They were at that period, and had been for some years, in great pecuniary distress, from the low prices of sugar and rum in this country ; they ascribed much of their embarrassment to the pressure of taxation on these articles, there having been no reduction of the excessive war duty on the former, while the tax on the latter amounted to 600 per cent. on the market-price of a gallon, proof-strength, or some thousands per cent. on the net proceeds remaining to the planter, after paying all charges. A reduction of war duties had taken place on some articles affecting other classes of the community, whilst the duty on coffee had been raised since the peace from eight-pence to one shilling per pound, or fifty per cent. When to these circumstances you add the aspersions on their characters of which I have given some specimens in a former page, you will be able to form a tolerably correct idea of the situation and feelings of the planters, when Lord Bathurst made his first communication. I now beg you to remark certain points which were well known to Lord Bathurst at that period.

* “ If the condition of the slave is to be improved, that improvement is to be introduced through the medium of his master. “ The masters are the instruments through whom, and by whom, “ you must act upon the slave population ; and if, by any proceedings of ours, we shall unhappily place between the slave and his “ master the barrier of insurmountable hostility, we shall at once “ put an end to the best chance of emancipation, or even of amendment : instead of diffusing gradually over those dark regions a pure “ and salutary light, we may at once kindle a flame only to be “ quenched in blood.”—*Mr. Canning, House of Commons.*

- 1st. His lordship knew the existence of the feeling I have described.
- 2nd. His lordship knew the falsehood of the charges brought against the colonists as a body. In a despatch to the governor of Jamaica, 14th July 1824, he says, "The assembly of Jamaica shewed their anxiety for the improvement of the condition of their slaves by many of the provisions of the consolidation act in 1816." His lordship has elsewhere stated that great improvements had taken place in the condition of the slaves, as well from the humane disposition of the planters as from the laws which had been enacted. In the year 1818, when Lord Combermere was governor of Barbadoes and commander-in-chief in the Leeward Islands, he says, "During my visits to the other West India islands, I have taken great pains *personally* to inform myself respecting the actual treatment of slaves; and it is with the most sincere pleasure and gratification that I observed, almost universally, the greatest attention paid by planters to the domestic comforts and proper regulations of the labours of their slaves." Of Barbadoes itself Lord Combermere reports even more favourably. In 1816, in Demerara, the inhabitants petitioned the governor and court of policy, praying that the colony might be divided into parishes or districts, and that they would cheerfully pay their share of expense to have clergymen selected by the bishop of London; they prayed for other improvements: the petition was approved by the governor and court of policy, and transmitted to the colonial department, where it was suffered to remain unnoticed.
- 3rdly. His lordship knew that amongst the inducements held out by the nation to persons to settle in the colonies, the one most highly prized (after that of the sacred guarantee of the rights of property) was the authority conferred on the local

legislatures to enact all laws for the internal regulation of the colonies subject to the sanction of the king in council. Of this right, Mr. Canning has said, the "local legislatures are "not a little jealous."

4thly. His lordship knew that amongst the temptations offered by the nation were more than one act of parliament, securing facilities and advantages to capitalists disposed to lend money on the security of West India property, that even aliens were invited to become lenders.

You are now enabled to perceive the relative position of both parties, and qualified to judge of his lordship's proceedings.

You will naturally suppose, that, in accordance with Mr. Canning's views, the first step was to *conciliate* the planters; that the first despatch of the noble secretary proclaimed to them that his lordship had no affinity of feeling with their calumniators; that the testimonies in their favour in his office should be published, not suppressed; that he would use his best endeavours with the Chancellor of the Exchequer to relieve them of a portion of their burthens as soon as practicable; that he would steer clear of all contact with their privileges; and that, before he submitted to their consideration any alteration in the laws, he should be in possession of the fullest information from persons of ability and honour, whom he should employ for the special purpose of instituting impartial enquiries on the spot. You will search in vain for any of these consolatory expressions in his lordship's despatches. He allows the colonists to believe that he gives full credit to their enemies; he keeps every testimony in their favour snug in his office; he makes no allusion to their pecuniary complaints; he institutes no investigation; he respects no rights or privileges, but at once tells the governors, that the following packet should convey the "*instructions*" which his Majesty's government would "*issue.*"

Accordingly, that next packet did convey such instructions (see page 5), consisting of many pages of legislative innovations, on a system that “no preceding generation of British legislators had ventured to touch with a reforming hand* ;” and, by way of making those innovations acceptable to the colonial legislatures. he declares, that “they are not to be understood as affording a full development of what his Majesty’s government have in contemplation.” Lest the colonial legislatures should be inoculated with a little of Mr. Canning’s diffidence on subjects of such vital importance, his lordship very considerately provides (see p. 6) that the governors and crown lawyers shall assist ; and that, in the event of their being all unequal to the task, he will immediately employ the Imperial Parliament ! It was no doubt very kind in Lord Bathurst to offer to save the Colonial legislatures so much trouble ; but the local legislatures were ungrateful enough to undervalue all this paternal care and tenderness : they considered it little better than an invasion of their rights and privileges, and declined to give up their exclusive province to legislate in all matters of internal regulation. The House of Assembly in Jamaica coupled their rejection of Lord Bathurst’s assistance with the declaration, that “This house, however, will at all times receive with attention and respect any suggestion of His Majesty’s ministers, relating to legislation, when offered *in a consistent and becoming manner.*” You will be pleased to observe, that at the time when Lord Bathurst thus treated the local legislatures, as if they had no rights, or indeed as if they had never even supposed themselves to be

* “Do we, in the ardour of our nascent reformation, forget, that during the ages for which this system has existed, no preceding generation of legislators has ventured to touch it with a reforming hand?—and have we the vanity to flatter ourselves that we can annihilate it at a blow? No, sir, no;—we must be contented to proceed, as I have already said, *gradually and cautiously.*”

Mr. Canning.

possessed of any, his Lordship had not charged them with any acts calculated to afford a pretext for calling their rights or even their usefulness into question. The forty-second clause of the Trinidad Order in Council is a virtual repeal of the Acts of Parliament encouraging loans on West India property; nay, it is tantamount to an act to compel mortgagees to foreclose all mortgages on the estates of planters resident in the West Indies; for what merchant would lend money when he knew that the borrower might destroy his security by two “unlawful” acts?—and what merchant would continue his advances, except on condition that the planter removed from a place where he might subject himself to the forfeiture of his property by being guilty of two unlawful acts. If a man is to forfeit his property, and be incapable of holding any thereafter for committing two unlawful acts, I should like to know what would be his lordship’s situation if judged by laws framed in a similar spirit! You will at once see that no planter in debt would be allowed to reside in the West Indies; that he must remove from his plantation, and consequently increase his embarrassments by the expense of residing elsewhere, and having to pay an agent. His lordship’s acts are so opposite to what Mr. Canning has described as his duty, that I almost suspect his lordship has transposed Mr. Canning’s words, and read them—“to do the greatest possible mischief with the least possible good.” If his lordship establishes this reading, I must acknowledge that he is entitled to an acquittal.

I have reserved for a distinct examination, on account of its importance, the question of “compulsory manumission,” which Mr. Canning calls the “opening by which slavery itself may escape.” That right honourable gentleman has said, “I do maintain that we, having all concurred in the guilt of rearing and fostering the evil, are not to turn round upon the planters, and say, ‘You alone

“ shall suffer all the penalty ; we determine to get
 “ rid of the moral pestilence, which affects our
 “ character as much as yours, which we have as
 “ much contributed to propagate as *you* ; but *you*,
 “ as spotted lepers, shall be banished from our
 “ society, and cast to utter ruin, to expiate our
 “ common crime.’” In Lord Bathurst’s letter to the
 governor of Demerara, of the 25th of February
 last, he says, “ In the event of the owner and the
 “ slave not agreeing in the price of the slave’s
 “ manumission, the owner shall appoint one, the
 “ protector of slaves another, and an umpire shall
 “ be appointed by the chief judge.” “ It is clear that
 “ an arbitration on such a principle would protect the
 “ interests of the owner ; and, if there were any
 “ objection, it would be that the bias was in his
 “ favour.”—Without stopping to canvas this last
 assertion, I shall just observe that I cannot compre-
 hend by what process of reasoning it can be sup-
 ported, as the protector of slaves and the chief
 judge hold their appointments at the pleasure of
 the colonial department, the head of which has ex-
 pressed his wish to promote and facilitate manu-
 missions ; and a more effectual mode of gratifying
 that wish than naming as arbitrators and umpires,
 persons known to think unfavourably of colonial
 property, I cannot conceive. I shall assume that
 the arbitrators are qualified and impartial, and even
 that they make a just award according to Lord
 Bathurst’s principle, which he explains to be
 “ a fair estimate of the loss which the owner may
 “ sustain.” I shall suppose that the two first ne-
 groes who apply for manumission in Demerara be-
 long to adjoining estates, the one estate rich soil,
 and the other poor, from a sand reef or any other
 cause, (and such cases of inequality* are not unusual) :

* Besides the very common inequality of soil, there is a great dif-
 ference in the value of estates from other causes. The works and
 buildings of a sugar estate are worth much more than the works and
 buildings on coffee or cotton plantations.

the estate with rich soil has just sufficient strength for its cultivation, whilst the other is overhanded. When the difference of the soil and strength are taken into consideration, it will be found, although the two negroes are in themselves of precisely the same value in every respect, that the slave belonging to the plantation with rich soil will have to pay much more than the other. I shall suppose double; say, for the former case, £400; and for the latter, £200. The owner who has to receive the £400 is not treated more liberally than his neighbour, who has only to receive £200: but what will be the feeling and opinion of the negro, who has to pay the £400? Will he acquiesce in the justice of the award? What will be the opinion and feelings of all the other slaves on the same property? Will they work cheerfully for their master, and will they also labour cheerfully for themselves, to acquire double the amount that their brethren on the adjoining plantation would require to purchase freedom? The answer is obvious. The result would be general and well-grounded dissatisfaction. The owner would soon find that the £400 would be no compensation to him; indeed, that no money could make amends for the exasperated and discontented feelings of his negroes. Let me, however, proceed a little further with Lord Bathurst's principle of compensation. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that the negroes would quietly and contentedly submit to the inequality of the price of manumission, the work of emancipation would not make much progress. After a certain number of manumissions, the slaves remaining would be reduced to the number without which the profitable cultivation could not be carried on; consequently all attempt at purchasing freedom must be vain, as the compensation to the masters would be nothing short of the whole value of the estate. To deprive a planter of any negroes after the strength of his estate has been reduced to the lowest number with which sufficient produce

could be raised to defray expenses, and leave some return to the proprietor, would be to deprive him of the entire value of his property. Before the progress of emancipation is traced to this stage, it must be evident, on the least reflection, that the price of manumissions must increase according, and in proportion to their number; which is a fatal objection to Lord Bathurst's principle, as it is impossible to compensate the owner for the discontent engendered in the minds of his slaves by their knowing that the price would thus rise on them. Another disadvantage of a serious character would accrue to the proprietor of a valuable estate. It has long been customary, when sales of slaves take place, to respect their repugnance to any particular person, as well as to gratify them when it can be done, by selling them to those whom they prefer; but should the price of manumission be regulated by the value of the estate to which a negro is attached, as well as by his own value, no proprietor of a productive property would be able to purchase slaves who would willingly go to him. No principle of appraisement that does not combine justice to the slave and to the owner, can ever secure a fair compensation to the planter. It is self-evident that if the price which a slave has to pay for his freedom is to depend upon the productiveness of the estate to which he may belong, and on his own individual value from bodily strength, intelligence, and faithfulness, that his interest is opposed to that of his master, and that his ingenuity will be exerted to diminish his own value, as well as that of his master's estate. Lord Bathurst, in his despatch to the governor of Demerara of the 25th Feb. last, already alluded to, has laboured hard to meet the difficulties urged by the court of policy; he says, "The principle of manumission will proceed on presumptive evidence of the slave having acquired habits of industry which may fit him for an independent existence, while it will secure to the owner that compensation to which it may be found

“ by experience, as the measure advances in operation, he will be fairly entitled ; and it is by experience alone that this can be ascertained.” So the planter is to give up his property on “ presumptive evidence,” and to trust to “ experience” for compensation ! I consider all such loose reasoning as vain attempts to screen the country from paying for the “ opening by which slavery may escape*.” If the nation *honestly* desires to make this “ opening,” means may be devised for effecting it, “ compatible with the well-being of the slaves, with the safety of the colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private property ;” but the nation must not shrink from its share of the expense. I hold it to be beyond the reach of human ingenuity to achieve “ compulsory manumission,” with justice to the planter and slave, except by an honest contribution on the part of the country. I am not so presumptuous as to imagine that the plan I shall take the liberty of suggesting is free from objection, but I believe I am not too sanguine in thinking that it is wholly divested of the glaring injustice and inconsistencies inherent in that proposed by Lord Bathurst. The grand object manifestly is to reconcile the interests and feelings of both the masters and slaves—any measure failing in this must be palpably defective in application. I conceive that a near approach would be made to that happy consummation by fixing a sum, as the value of each description of slave, not to be altered or affected by any consideration of strength, skill, or character, but to be regulated entirely by the nature of the occupation and age of the slave. For instance, the population of a West India estate is composed of boilers,

* Lord Bathurst admits that the time may come for the interference of “ individual benevolence,” and the state to make up the deficiency between what the slave may be able to earn and what the owner may lose ; but this admission only confirms my opinion, as compulsory manumission ought not to have been proposed without the accompaniment of a compensation fund.

coopers, carpenters, tradesmen of various other descriptions, and field negroes. Let a price be fixed for each of these classes (and of any other class into which the slave population of the colonies may be divided), according to age. A table of these particulars might be made public in each colony, and thus obviate all doubt. Whenever a slave could produce the sum attaching to his class and age, as the fruits of his or her honest industry, *but not otherwise*, the slave should be entitled to demand freedom on the payment thereof, and the owner should be obliged to grant it, after having had such slave appraised according to Lord Bathurst's principle of compensation for the actual loss, and having been paid the difference between such appraisement and the sum received from the slave. This difference to be paid by the British nation. If the slaves thus manumitted will work for reasonable hire, as has been contended, the national sacrifice will be inconsiderable; and if they will not so work, it is fit that the nation should pay for the experiment. By Lord Bathurst's principle, the slaves would have a temptation to diminish their value. By my plan, they would have every inducement to behave well and to improve themselves, because every step in improvement would be an additional facility in acquiring the means of purchase. For this marked and inestimable distinction the nation ought to pay most cheerfully, provided the professions in favour of the slave be sincere. As the value of slaves throughout the colonies is not the same, it would of course be necessary that the prices fixed for each class of negroes should be regulated according to the peculiar circumstances of each colony. It is also obvious that my plan could not come into *full* operation at once, and that even when it did it would not be so perfect as to bid defiance to cavil, or even to reasonable objection; for I am not blind to some points susceptible of improvement. All that I venture to believe is, that it is the best that has yet been offered. In the equitable arrangement of prices

of manumissions, and in the mode of ascertaining the fair compensation to the planters, there will doubtless be many difficulties to overcome.

Having laid before you the proceedings of the Colonial Department, and pointed out some of the bearings of these proceedings, I now request your attention, on constitutional considerations, to the danger that will ensue if you confer on them the authority of parliamentary sanction. The rights of property, which are vested in the planters, have been placed by a nobleman* more distinguished for his rank and private virtues, than for his legal knowledge, on a footing with those of receivers of stolen goods; but an author has been found to deny to the planters even the respectable † rights so liberally conceded by the noble duke, and to assert that, as by the “Gospel Dispensation” there can be no such state as West India slavery, there can be no titles, yet I believe I may venture to rely on the national faith, pledged with all the solemnity prescribed by the British constitution, and assume that the planters’ rights are undoubted. No charge has been brought against them of having violated any of the conditions on which the rights were granted; on the contrary, it is allowed that they have greatly ameliorated the condition of the slaves since this country ceased to force supplies on the colonies—indeed, it is not pretended that the national guaranty was granted to ensure a state of comfort superior to that now en-

* Duke of Devonshire, at the Derby county meeting.

† “Let us recollect what prodigious ruin one unguarded expression, dropt in the heat of debate, may occasion to those whom we would not willingly injure; while it is at the same time clear that the most ardent and enthusiastic eloquence cannot hasten the enjoyment of freedom by those who are not yet in a fit state to receive the boon.”—*Mr. Canning*.

“My fixed opinion is, that those great and desirable objects have been more retarded by the intemperate zeal of those who have been the advocates of such measures, than they had been or could be by any direct opposition on the part of those who have opposed them.”—*Lord Chancellor’s Speech, House of Lords*.

joyed by the slaves. If in these circumstances a secretary of state be authorized to persevere in a course that may have the effect of lessening in value, or of rendering insecure the property of the planters; if he is to be the sole judge of what may produce these effects, is it not evident that the rights, under the most solemn national pledge, dwindle into rights dependent on the will of a secretary of state? It would startle you to hear a secretary of state avow that property held under acts of parliament was at his mercy; yet Lord Bathurst's proceedings towards the colonists have not stopt short of such a declaration. He requires the colonists to adopt certain measures—they say that the value and security of their property would be thereby affected, and therefore demand a pledge of indemnification against loss*. His lordship thinks the measure will increase both the value and security of property, and therefore will not entertain a proposal respecting indemnity. His lordship tells the planters that they must sell such parts of their property as may be demanded of them, and that certain persons shall be the judges of what they are to receive in compensation. The planters say that they will not sell such parts as may be demanded, that they will only sell such parts as they please, and that they will not leave it to the persons whom his lordship names, to estimate the value of their property, but that they will keep it until they can get what they think to be its value—they add, that if they were not to be the judges of the parts to be sold, they might be deprived of the very parts without which the rest would be valueless; the stream

* “ Your Committee have also learnt from the agent, that in his
 “ conference with Ministers, it has been refused to acknowledge our
 “ claims to compensation for the injuries the colonies must sustain
 “ in the mere endeavour to carry the scheme of emancipation into
 “ effect; by which refusal the Ministers have shewn an inclination
 “ not only to dispose of our property without our consent, but even
 “ to violate those common rules of honesty which ought to govern
 “ nations as well as private persons.”—*Report of a Committee to*
the House of Assembly, Jamaica, 11 Dec. 1823.

that turns the mill—the centre-stone of the arch. His lordship replies that their arguments have had no weight, and that he must be obeyed, or he will call down on them the vengeance of the King in council and of parliament. It is to be observed that his lordship's measures had undergone no examination before parliament;—no committees had sat in anxious deliberation; no witnesses had been examined on the probable effects; no counsel had been heard; in short, not one of the safeguards provided against the inroads to be made on private property by half a mile of road, a bridge, dock, or a tunnel, were thought necessary, as only the rights, and property, and lives of persons under the displeasure of the public were concerned. It is dangerous to establish as a precedent that whenever the public voice is raised,—whatever be the means or artifices employed for that purpose, it is to be obeyed without enquiry, and without respect for acknowledged rights. When great public excitement exists, it is the duty of government to be doubly vigilant, whilst going with the stream, to steer clear of all encroachments on private property*. This caution once neglected, who can say that his property will not be the next sacrificed? The contempt manifested by Lord Bathurst for the rights and privileges of the colonists can be ascribed to nothing but a feeling of security, arising from the persuasion that the public voice is directed against them. In other cases government has sought the sanction of parliamentary committees, or reports of commissioners. For instance, the change effected in the law of Scotland by the introduction of trial by jury in civil cases, although an acknowledged improvement, was preceded by a laborious investigation, in the course of which every person whose interests were

* “Let us now (however altered may be the universal feeling of the nation) hold the equilibrium fairly, and deal justly between the parties who dealt in slaves, and those who have during so long a period encouraged this state of things in our West India Colonies.”—*Lord Chancellor, House of Lords, 7th March, 1826.*

likely to be affected, had an opportunity of being heard. No important alteration has been attempted either in Scotland or Ireland without similar caution and investigation. In England circumspection is as much in fashion: even acts of parliament passed for temporary purposes are not allowed to expire without enquiry: the Bank Restriction Act of 1797, which was only intended as a temporary measure, and the duration of which beyond two years after a general peace was never contemplated, was allowed to exist for years afterwards, and was not repealed until a full examination of every party and interest before committees of both Houses of Parliament. The corn laws may be adduced as another precedent for caution. The very advocates for them have long been satisfied that they are bad, but it has never been suggested by the wildest theorist that they ought to be abolished without enquiry. So far from that, the government sent a gentleman supposed to be well qualified, to the continent, for the express purpose of collecting information, and both Houses of Parliament will have been in possession of the information for months before the discussion, and before any thing is actually determined, there will be committees of both houses, and witnesses examined from different parts of the country. That such extreme caution is not superfluous, one example from the proceedings of the present year will prove. His Majesty's ministers had expressed themselves in strong terms on the justice, and, indeed, indispensable necessity of placing the Scotch and English banks on the same footing respecting small notes. The Prime Minister had said that without such uniformity the Bank of England would have to keep specie for all the Scotch banks, without any remuneration, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer had gone so far as to declare, that without such uniformity he would not envy the situation of any future Chancellor of the Exchequer; but when the subject was investigated before a committee of the House of Commons, the

Chancellor of the Exchequer himself joined the majority in voting against that uniformity.

It will scarcely be said after Mr. Canning's description of the importance and difficulty of the West India question, that it deserved or required less caution, consideration, and enquiry, than the subjects which I have just enumerated; and, therefore, I presume, now that there has been time for reflection, that no further proceedings will be adopted without the fullest and fairest investigation of the claims of the planters. If his Majesty's government will consent to be as cautious for the next three years, as Lord Bathurst, in their names, has been precipitate for the last three, they will make some amends to the colonists, and accomplish their object in a more effectual manner than by harshness and temerity. Mr. Canning, as the organ of administration in the House of Commons, has uniformly treated the question as one requiring time and caution; and deprecated the interference of parliament on any pretext short of contumacy. The subjoined extracts* will demonstrate that the conduct of the

* "The legislature of the Bahamas have evinced their anxiety for the improvement of the condition of the slaves, by their late act for amending and consolidating the slave laws, which it is *impossible not* to view as comprising many humane and judicious enactments materially contributing to such improvement."—*Lord Bathurst to the Governor of the Bahamas, 14th Aug. 1824.*

"Although after a full consideration of the Grenada act, I cannot but be sensible that it falls short of what has been recommended, yet it deserves to be considered as an important improvement of the existing code. Its provisions are *all* of a beneficial nature as far as they go, and contain nothing that can stand in the way of its confirmation. Where the enactments are deficient, either in defining or securing their object, there is a manifest good intention, which assures me, that these inadvertencies will be readily corrected."—*Lord Bathurst to the Governor of Grenada, 20th Oct. 1825.*

"I am convinced, that there is a very sincere desire to do, from time to time, what may appear practicable."—*Governor of Jamaica to Lord Bathurst, 24th Dec. 1824.*

colonists manifests a very different spirit from that of contumacy. Wherever a disposition has been

“ The Court of Policy and the inhabitants of this colony generally, are heartily disposed to meet the views of his Majesty’s government with regard to every practicable amelioration of the state of the slave population.”—*Governor of Demerara to Lord Bathurst, 2d April, 1824.*

“ From a residence of nearly fifteen years in this colony, I am happy to bear testimony to the kind and careful treatment of the slaves by every proprietor here; and I am highly gratified in being able to state, that many of the improvements suggested by the government at home, have been already anticipated by the humanity and wisdom of those who have legislated for this colony, during my residence in it.”—*Governor of St. Vincent’s to the Speaker of the Council.*

“ I am happy in being able to assure your lordship, that a very general wish to ameliorate the condition of the slaves, and to instruct them in the principles of the Established Church, seems to pervade the great mass of the proprietors, and every facility is afforded of visiting the several plantations.”—*Bishop of Jamaica to Lord Bathurst, 12th March, 1825.*

“ I have the highest satisfaction in being able to assure your lordship, that the same good feelings which I had the pleasure to communicate upon a former occasion, with regard to Kingston, continues to animate every part of this island which I have hitherto visited. Mr. Archdeacon Pope and myself have just completed a progress through all the parishes, except two: a detailed account of all ecclesiastical matters which came under our notice, shall be forwarded to your lordship as soon as I am furnished with all the necessary particulars from the clergy. The general result of our observations has been a hearty desire on the part of the proprietors generally, or their representatives, cheerfully to promote, as far as their limited means will allow, any measures which I have thought it my duty to suggest for the benefit of the church. Public meetings have been called in many parishes, and private subscriptions are entered into, to promote the same desirable object.”—*Bishop of Jamaica to Lord Bathurst, 16th March, 1825.*

“ I have the honour to inform your lordship, that on visiting the several islands within my diocese, I was received throughout with every mark of public and private respect, accompanied with the assurance on the part of the respective legislatures and proprietors, of their readiness to co-operate with me, to the utmost extent of their means, in the measures which I had the honour to propose.”—*Bishop of Barbadoes to Lord Bathurst, 7th Oct. 1825.*

“ I trust that your lordship will regard this liberal grant as a further proof of the good disposition existing in the island of Barbadoes (and I may with truth add, in every other island within my

evinced to delay compliance with the wishes of government to as great an extent as would be consistent with a due regard to safety and the rights of property, that disposition may in every instance be attributed to Lord Bathurst's *inconsiderate* and *unconciliating* despatches of the 12th of June, and 9th of July, 1823, on which I have already offered remarks.

The course which I humbly suggest is, a parliamentary declaration to the effect that there is no intention to deny the rights and privileges of the colonists—that before the adoption of any measures affecting their interests, the fullest and most impartial investigation will be allowed; that parliament is sensible that the condition of the slaves has been ameliorated of late years; that there is, therefore, a well grounded expectation that the planters will introduce the ameliorations recommended by his Majesty's government, with as little delay as is consistent with a due regard to the safety of the colonies. That in regard to the question of permitting the slaves to purchase their freedom without the consent of their owners, nothing should be pressed on the colonists until the important subject has undergone the fullest investigation in the way best calculated to do justice to all parties. Such a declaration would conciliate the colonists, and incline them to do every thing in their power to consult the wishes of government. Indeed, I might venture to predict, that in less than three years it would be found that the substance of every important measure in the Trinidad order in council would be found in the codes of the other colonies, save and except the provisions of the forty-second clause, which are more adverse to the spirit of the present day than any of the laws denounced by Mr. Wilberforce, as expressed in characters of blood; and except, also, the clause

“ diocese), to extend and place on a more effectual footing the several means of religious instruction.”—*Bishop of Barbadoes to Lord Bathurst, 5th Nov. 1825.*

sanctioning manumission against the consent of the owner. Should my prediction be verified; of which I have not the shadow of a doubt, the question for your consideration would be narrowed to that of "compulsory manumission;" and that question is of such vital interest, that time ought to be allowed for the fullest consideration, and the most extended enquiry. You will be pleased to bear in mind that this measure has been brought forward without any proof that slaves who acquire their freedom through habits of industry, find in any reasonable wages sufficient inducement to continue industrious. All past experience is at variance with the presumption that any rate of hire, however high, will overcome their repugnance to labour*. To compel them to work would require a system of coercion far more galling than a state of slavery. Without coercion, the manumitted would soon sink into a state of indolence and barbarism. But for argument, let us suppose that when slaves become enlightened and buy the freedom with the earnings of their industry, they will work for wages. They would naturally strive to obtain high wages, and the example of this country would furnish them with the means. When workmen

* "With respect to free labour, he must say, that from all the information he had received upon the subject, he could not point out one instance in which the experiment of an alteration from compulsory to free labour had been fairly tried and succeeded: indeed, he knew many instances in which that experiment had failed."—*Lord Bathurst's Speech, House of Lords, 16th March, 1824.*

"As to the free negroes, it appears, that their industry is still more sparing: of their repugnance to all sorts of labour, the most ample evidence is produced in the Report of the Committee of Privy Council, in 1788."—*Brougham on Colonial Policy.*

"I must be allowed to suspect, that before we people the unsettled colonies with negroes who will work for hire, we must discover a new race of Africans, industrious in their own country, or invent some method of operating instantaneously upon the tribes already known: an enlargement of desires and a change of habits, which in the natural progress of human society, is the slow produce of many succeeding ages."—*Brougham on Colonial Policy.*

in this country know that their masters have large orders to execute within a particular time, they immediately demand an increase of wages proportioned to what they know to be the necessity for their assistance. Masters endeavour to conceal from their workmen the extent of the orders they receive. In the West Indies concealment would be impossible, as the negroes would see when the various crops of sugar, coffee, and cotton, were in a state to occasion total loss through failure of assistance, and they would not neglect the opportunities to refuse to work without excessive wages. In this country men cannot long abstain from work; they must pay for food, clothing, and lodging. In the West Indies the calls for money would not be equally urgent. All absolute wants could be supplied with little trouble; and the planters would be left at the mercy of the free negroes. Under such circumstances no estate would be worth two years' purchase. With such possibilities in prospect, it is not surprising that the planters should be opposed to the opening of any other door to let out slavery than that which is now open, and through which there is a gradual escape. In Jamaica the manumissions are said to have been four thousand, between the years 1820 and 1823; and in the beginning of the present year, there were upwards of one hundred voluntary manumissions in Demerara. It will probably be found on examining the question, that any larger opening would be incompatible "with the well-being of the slaves themselves, with the safety of the colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the rights of private property."

THE END.

