PRESBYTER'S LETTERS

ON THE

WEST INDIA QUESTION;

ADDRESSED TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

SIR GEORGE MURRAY, G.C.B., M.P.

COLONIAL SECRETARY, &c. &c.

BY HENRY DUNCAN, D.D.

RUTHWELL.

LONDON:

T. AND G. UNDERWOOD, FLEET-STREET.

1830.

PREFACE.

The principal substance of this little work originally appeared, under the signature of Presbyter, in the weekly columns of the Dumfries and Galloway Courier, a Provincial Newspaper of some celebrity. As these ephemeral productions attracted considerable attention, the Author has been induced carefully to revise them, and after enlarging them by filling up such parts as seemed to be defective, to give them to the Public in their present form.

Should these Letters prove the means of leading the community, or even a single influential individual, to a more dispassionate and enlightened consideration of the question at issue—a question involving the most

important interests both of the white and black population of our colonies in the Western Archipelago, he will thankfully acknowledge that his humble labour has not been without its reward; and will feel satisfied, that, in stretching a little beyond the immediate line of his professional duties as a minister of the gospel, he has, at least, not been deviating from the service of his Divine Master.

RUTHWELL MANSE,
October, 1830.

CONTENTS.

Page

LETTER I.—Introductory Remarks 9

II.—Slavery not prohibited by express Christian precept .. 17

III.—Our Slaves at present unfit for freedom 22

IV.—Progressive improvement of the Negro race 31

V.—The same subject continued 41

VI.—Period advancing when Emancipation will become the interest of the Planters 52

VII.—Duty of Government 63

VIII.—Duty of the Public at home, and of West India Proprietors 71

IX.—People of Colour—their condition and the means of its improvement 87

X.—Foreign Slave Trade—its extent and consequences .. 98

XI.—Necessity of reducing Taxes on West India Produce —Conclusion 109

LETTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

Sir,

I am well aware that your office of Colonial Secretary is no sinecure; and, in particular, that the questions involved in the policy which your public duty imposes on you, as to our possessions in the West Indies, are of a delicate and embarrassing nature. Nor am I inclined to forget the forbearance due to a brave and patriotic individual, who from asserting the honour of his country in the field, has transferred his services to the cabinet, and has found himself suddenly engaged in the unwonted turmoil of politics.

You may, therefore, rest assured, that I do not, thus unbidden, obtrude myself on your notice, either for the unfriendly purpose of embarrassing your operations, or with the arrogant expectation of conveying to you instruction or advice; but simply from the hope that by associating your well-known name with this humble

attempt to benefit those over whose interests you preside, I may obtain for myself a more patient and favourable hearing.

The discussion of our West Indian affairs at the present moment, it were not possible, were it even desirable, to blink. On the one hand, the feelings excited in this country as to the question of slave manumission, and on the other, the depressed state of colonial produce, which must compel West India proprietors to apply to Parliament for a reduction of taxes, render such a discussion as unavoidable, as the subject itself is important.

With regard to the former of these questions, indeed, the note of preparation has already been sounded by the abolitionists, in various quarters of the country; and in Ireland especially, a strong demonstration has been made of the sentiments of all political parties. Meetings have been held, and petitions have been prepared, against slavery as it exists in our colonies; and these are, doubtless, only a prelude to steps of a similar nature in other parts of the United Kingdom; while publications have issued from the press, intended, by exciting the public indignation against the colonists, and by depreciating the value of the colonies, to hurry on a crisis, which, if premature, it is impossible for any sober-thinking and impartial man to contemplate without alarm.

The period, therefore, is momentous; and I have too high an opinion, Sir, of your good sense and liberality not to be persuaded, that, under such circumstances, you will take in good part the honest endeavours of an humble individual to direct public attention to the course

which appears to his mind best calculated for promoting the general welfare.

The very name of slavery is happily so abhorrent to the inhabitants of this free and Christian land, that the mind readily admits as true every description of misery among the enslaved, with which impassioned oratory, delighting in its own power, strives to harrow the feelings; and, our sympathies being roused, the imagination warms, and nature revolts. When we are told by an eloquent speaker, with such a mixture of truth in his glowing words, as serves to conceal their exaggerations, that the sugar and coffee which the soil of our western dependencies so abundantly produces to pamper the luxurious taste of Britons, is raised by the forced labour of negro slaves, driven to their daily toil by the lash already red with their blood; and when we are further told, that these slaves are either free-born Africans, treacherously torn from their native land, who, after surviving the horrors of the middle passage, have been subjected to the degradation and misery of a cruel and unmitigated bondage, or the descendants of these injured fellow-men, born under British dominion, to a life of the same hopeless and heartless oppression—when these things are heard and believed, there is no room for wonder that the heart should sicken, and that all the man within us should cry aloud for vengeance.

That slavery should have ever been permitted to exist, under the sanction of Britain, is itself a fact deeply humiliating to our national pride; but that our countrymen should have been the principals and the agents in scenes of such horrid injustice, cruelty and murder, as came to light in the parliamentary investiga-

tion of the slave trade, and that, even after this infamous traffic in human flesh was, at the resistless call of an indignant Christian nation, put down by the strong arm of power—that even after this, the crowds of miserable human beings thus violently removed from the land of their fathers, with their children and their children's children, should still be doomed to endure a yoke so unjustly imposed, are facts, the very mention of which is calculated to rouse and inflame the mind, precluding all prudential reasoning and cool deliberation.—" Let us at once and for ever wash off this foul stain from the British name," is the sentiment with which every generous heart must burn on the first consideration of a question thus partially stated; and till the mind is presented with more enlarged views of the interests of the slaves themselves—for we speak not at present of the claims of their masters—to reason and to hesitate on such a subject, seems to be a species of sacrilege against human nature.

But it is here precisely that I conceive the danger to lie. It is not under the exaggerating influence of excited feeling that any political question, and much less such a question as this, can be wisely determined; and, deep as is the interest I feel in the ultimate manumission of the black population of the West Indies, I am on that very account, and out of a sincere and Christian regard for the welfare of that degraded race, most anxious that my fellow-citizens should look at the subject in all its bearings, and should not take either their facts or opinions from the fervid speeches delivered at public meetings, or from the *ex parte* statements of tracts and periodical publications. We all know how

much men attached to a party, or under the influence of some strong feeling, are, with the most honest intentions, liable to be biassed in their judgment; and how unwilling too they naturally are to admit the truth of every fact which militates against their views, or even tends to modify them; nor can any of us be ignorant how generally writers and speakers regard it as a legitimate artifice to throw into the shade all opposing arguments, and to give a high, if not a false colouring, to every thing which tends to advance their cause. But persons of this description—as you, Sir, well know—are very unsafe guides on a subject so interesting to the feelings, and involving such momentous considerations as those which relate to the state of our Western Colonies.

I have lately been led into this train of thinking by a candid perusal of some recent works on that question, as well as by the accounts which have from time to time been published in the newspapers, of the anti-slavery meetings already alluded to; and being struck with the fatal consequences which might arise from hasty and violent measures, originating in an uninformed zeal and a misguided benevolence, I have felt it my duty to contribute my mite towards a sober consideration of the subject. I flatter myself that, whatever may be my disqualifications, I shall at least command unprejudiced attention, when I state that, so far from belonging to those whose interests and prepossessions are favourable to slavery, I have, from my youth to the present hour, entertained only one desire on the subject, and that desire has been for the final emancipation of the Africans, placed by the unprin-

cipled cupidity of our forefathers under British domination.

This intrusion of my own motives and feelings will, I am sure, be pardoned by you, to whom I have not the honour to be known, and who must be well aware how essential it is to a fair hearing on such a subject, that a writer should be acknowledged to be free from the bias of personal interest, and to be actuated by patriotic intentions. To those who happen to be acquainted with me, such a statement, I trust, is altogether superfluous.

No trifling part of the abhorrence with which negro slavery is now viewed, took its origin, I suspect, in the excitement of the public mind on the discovery of the manifold and unspeakable atrocities practised in the slave trade. But these scenes of horror, so far as Britain is concerned, have passed away for ever; and I trust one other glory yet remains to be achieved for her, added to those with which she has immortalized her name on that very ocean which was conscious of her disgraceful cruelties,—the glory of putting an end to the inhuman traffic throughout the world.

The present question, however, is of a very different nature, and ought not to bear the odium of delinquencies, over which Time has, for a quarter of a century, been passing her hand. Whatever may have been the injustice with which so many of the black population of Africa were originally transported to the West (and God forbid that I should say one word in palliation of those horrors), in our islands they now live—British subjects, cast on British protection;—and the only ques-

tion which remains with regard to them is, How shall we best acquit ourselves, both nationally and individually, of the responsibility in the sight of God and man which is thus entailed on us? This is an important duty which no sophistry can gainsay, and no interest, either public or private, can counterbalance. If, on a due consideration of all the circumstances connected with their situation, we discover that we can best compensate their injuries, either by returning them to their native soil, or by instantly breaking off their fetters on the shore to which they have been carried—in the name of humanity—in the name of justice, let it be done. No expediency as to their masters—no vested rights—no sanction of unhallowed laws, can cancel the sacred obligation which lies on Britain to repair, as far as they can be repaired, the wrongs of that crushed and degraded race. Objections raised on such fallacious grounds you will, doubtless, cast to the winds. If former administrations, by their unprincipled policy, deluded and entrapped the colonists into a snare, as I believe they did, let this wrong also be redressed, and let the country pay the forfeit.

But I am well persuaded it will be found, that neither of the methods to which I have referred, can in any degree answer the end in view. Every one sees the absurdity of sending the negroes back to Africa; and it will, I think, require no great effort of reasoning to shew, that immediate manumission, in any shape, could not fail to be a curse instead of a blessing—that it would add injury to injury, and would crown all, by preparing, for a whole people, inevitable ruin, under the insidious and insulting name of a boon.

Such is the view of this part of the question which I first propose to take, and, with your permission, I shall afterwards use the freedom to make a few cursory remarks on the whole subject, with the importance of which I am deeply impressed.

LETTER II.

SLAVERY NOT PROHIBITED BY EXPRESS CHRISTIAN PRECEPT.

Sir,

If there were any direct precept in the word of God, declaring slavery unlawful, this would be decisive of the question, and, precluding all argument on its expediency to the slaves themselves, and still more to their masters, would establish the absolute necessity of immediate and uncompromising manumission; because no consideration of consequences can ever be brought in competition with a command of the Most High. But happily this is not the case. The Mosaic Law not only permitted, but sanctioned by express statute, the holding of heathen slaves; and, what is more, allowed the temporary bondage, and, by consent of the party—a consent rendered irrevocable by certain public forms—even the perpetual slavery of individuals among the chosen people themselves.

The law revealed to Moses, however, may be held, on account of the temporary nature of many of its en-

actments, adapted as they were to the very peculiar circumstances of the Israelites, to be, in the present instance, no sufficient guide to Christians; and it is therefore of much greater consequence to remark that, in all the injunctions of our Saviour, and in all the writings of his apostles, from the beginning to the end of the New Testament, there is not a single precept directly condemning the state of servitude to which the laws and customs of the world had, in their days, reduced so large a proportion of the lower orders; and that, on the contrary, there are many directions given to Christian masters as to the treatment of their slaves, (for such is the meaning of the word *douloi*, translated, in our version, *servants*,) and to Christian slaves as to the duty which they owe their masters, which all tacitly, but unequivocally, infer that the condition was not positively prohibited.

The case of Onesimus is remarkably in point. He was a runaway slave belonging to Philemon, an eminent Christian of the Apostolic age—who, having gone to Rome while Paul was detained in that capital of the world as a prisoner, was, by the spiritual labours of that zealous teacher, converted to the Christian faith, and became exceedingly serviceable and acceptable to the aged apostle; so much so, indeed, that he would gladly have retained him about his own person, had he not been impelled, by a sense of duty, to restore him to his master. Here, undoubtedly, was an opportunity which could not have been passed over, of laying down an authoritative precept as to the unlawfulness of slavery, had it been the object of the gospel to interfere directly in this respect with the established law of nations. But Paul did no such thing. On the contrary,

he avowed the authority of the master over his slave, and, while he delicately intimated the strong desire which he felt of having the advantage of his services, explicitly owned that he had no right to these services without Philemon's permission; and, indeed, that, were his wishes complied with, the favour would be wholly bestowed, not by Onesimus, but by his master, "Whom," says he, "I would have retained with me, that in *thy stead* he might have ministered unto me; but without thy mind would I do nothing; that thy benefit [that is, the benefit derived from thee] should not be, as it were, of necessity, but willingly."

It is true, indeed, that the apostle says he might have been "much bold in Christ to enjoin" Philemon to do what was "convenient" or proper; but if this meant any thing more than a gently expressed hint as to the personal obligations which he owed to "Paul the aged," at all events the context abundantly proves that it bore not the slightest reference to the duty of restoring his slave to freedom. It is true, also, that the apostle afterwards affectionately and earnestly exhorts him to receive his converted bondman "not now as a slave, but above a slave, a brother beloved;" but I see no reason to believe that this request necessarily implies manumission; and even granting that it does so, it is assuredly not urged, as a right which Onesimus could justly demand, but as a favour to be conceded to the apostle by the friendship and gratitude of one of his converts, who owed to him, as he emphatically expresses it, "even his own self."

The whole of this remarkable and warm-hearted epistle is indeed exceedingly instructive in several respects, and especially as it places the question of slavery,

so far as it is a religious one, on its true footing. Christianity does not alter by express laws the political condition of society; but it is eminently calculated in its spirit and tendency, to break down all that is harsh and partial in that condition; gradually, but irresistibly and permanently, sweeping cruelty and oppression from the earth, and spreading, over the whole face of an enlightened and renovated world, the blessings of free institutions and equal rights.

To recur to the case of Onesimus as an example.—Who can doubt that the good Philemon, if he did not give legal manumission to his restored slave, and thus "do more than Paul said," would at least comply with the request of his spiritual father to the very letter, and treating his fellow-convert, from that moment, rather as a "brother beloved" than as a bondman—would raise him to a station in his family to which he had been previously an entire stranger? And a similar effect must necessarily be produced by the influence of Christianity, wherever it is embraced, not in name, but in reality. The mild and affectionate spirit of the gospel requires that, without distinction of bond or free, we should regard each other as brethren, and conduct ourselves towards the very meanest of our fellow-creatures with the kindness due to members of the same family. This necessarily implies an entire change in the relation which subsists between a master and his slaves, and, by immediate consequence, although not by direct statute, leads, under favourable circumstances, to their complete manumission—an effect actually produced in the condition of the lower classes within the bounds of European Christendom.

I infer, then, from this statement, that the duty which

a Christian owes to his slaves, is, not only to treat them with the strictest regard to justice and humanity, but also to use his best efforts for raising them in the scale of society, and promoting the interest of their immortal part; and, as it seems to me, on the proper means of performing this paramount duty, clearly hinges the question of manumission. Independent of this, there does not appear, from the express precepts of Scripture, to be any abstract right to freedom inherent in the slave. I speak advisedly when I limit the observation to express precepts, for the lawfulness of the condition of slavery is by no means settled by ascertaining this point. The question depends on other grounds altogether, which I shall endeavour to develope in the course of the proposed inquiry.*

And this brings me to the very principles on which I intend to found my argument; which are, that the Negro population of the West Indies are not at this moment in a condition to be benefited by freedom; that they may and ought to be brought into this condition; that they are in actual progress towards it; that this progress should be accelerated by every legitimate means; and that, when the period shall arrive in which emancipation shall cease to be an injury to them, it will, from that moment, become an act of injustice and criminality to withhold it.

---

* See note A.

LETTER III.

OUR SLAVES AT PRESENT UNFIT FOR FREEDOM.

Sir,

The incapacity of the negroes in our West India possessions for the immediate enjoyment of freedom, considering them as a body, will scarcely be questioned by any candid man at all acquainted with their real circumstances. It is now twenty-two years since the slave trade was put down by law, and although it is but justice to remark, that for many years no new slaves have been brought from Africa into our dependencies, not less than a fourth part of the whole black population, even in our oldest colonies, still consists of *imported* Africans, while in those which have fallen into our possession at a later date, the proportion is much greater. These Africans, being chiefly savage warriors taken in battle, brought along with them all the ignorance, all the prejudice, and all the superstitious and immoral practices of their countrymen. To govern them was difficult; to enlighten and reform them, even if it had been attempted, would have been a still more arduous task;

and I fear it is necessary to add, that, till lately, no such attempt was made.

An undue contempt for the negro race unhappily prevailed among the whites, induced, I suppose, during the continuance of the traffic, by the brutal condition in which their minds were kept on account of the constant importation of fresh barbarians with their savage manners from the original source, and afterwards maintained, like other prepossessions, chiefly from its having once gained a hold of public opinion. In whatever way it originated, there undoubtedly existed a general conviction that the intellectual and moral perceptions of a negro were altogether of an inferior order, and nearly incapable of culture or improvement; that the whole race, in short, had the stamp of imbecility and corruption upon their minds, and, like the brutes, were intended by nature to be drudges and bearers of burden to the higher species of human beings. It was, I believe, by such reasoning as this, that the great body of slave-masters, while professing the diffusive principles of Christianity, justified to themselves the pertinacity with which they so long withheld from their negro dependants all moral and religious instruction.

But there was yet another opinion, which, though in some respects inconsistent with the former, seems, by being united with it in the sentiments of the planters, to have confirmed their determination of denying to their slaves all access to the lights possessed by themselves. It was thought necessary to keep the black population in a state of mental darkness, lest, by learning their own strength, and acquiring intellectual vigour, they should be induced to combine

against their masters, and overwhelm the whites in one common ruin—an alarm which was probably increased, by some injudicious but well-meant endeavours, made by societies in this country, to enlighten the negroes in spite of their masters. Both the fear and the prejudice are now rapidly disappearing; but, while they lasted, it is not surprising that they should have erected an impregnable barrier between the slaves and civilization, and should have even excluded them from that knowledge which indeed forms the basis of all moral and intellectual improvement—the knowledge of the will of God and the grace of the Redeemer, as revealed in the Scriptures.

Stupified by hereditary ignorance, and jealously excluded from the light of knowledge, human and divine, such blind and degraded beings must be held, during their continuance in a condition so abject, altogether incapable either of duly estimating or rightly improving the blessings of liberty; and, although it will afterwards be shewn that they are now in a state of rapid amelioration, the change in their circumstances is much too recent to render it either desirable or safe that they should yet be permitted to become their own masters.

Another circumstance, operating along with those already mentioned, tends also to render the immediate manumission of the negroes entirely inconsistent with their best interests. They are but little accustomed to labour without compulsion, and would, in their present state of feeling—I speak of the great bulk of the population, for doubtless there would be many exceptions—abuse their freedom from restraint, by spending the greater part of their time in idleness or intoxication,

if not in attempts on the lives and properties of their former masters. This is not a mere hypothesis. It is confirmed by undeniable experience.

In Hayti, where the negroes achieved their own freedom by the destruction of their masters, a government of blacks has been established ever since the commencement of the French revolution. And what has been the result? Precisely what might have been anticipated from the sudden emancipation of an ignorant, savage, and unprincipled population. A reign succeeded, first of anarchy, and then of almost unmitigated tyranny; and when, after a quarter of a century of turmoil and oppression, the new community at last settled down into somewhat of a more regular government, the public functionaries found it necessary to drive their constituents to labour, at the point of the bayonet! Nor is the condition of what may be called the lower classes of the people in that beautiful island greatly improved at this moment. In compelling them to work, fine and imprisonment have been substituted by law for more arbitrary means, but the necessity which exists of having recourse to even this modification of a compulsory system, indicates a state of society the very reverse of flattering. The fact, indeed, is, that the inferior orders are poor, abject, and dissipated in the extreme; and, so averse are many of them to toil, that, when any extraordinary work is to be performed, either by government, or even by private individuals, the object is said to be effected by applying to the military police, "who sweep together all the idle negroes that can be found, and keep them to labour till the work is done."

Yet, notwithstanding this power assumed by the

negro government, of enforcing labour by compulsion, official documents prove that the wealth of the island has lamentably decreased. On comparing the produce of St. Domingo (Hayti) under white proprietors previous to the revolution, with its present produce, we find, that in its former condition, from the French part of the island alone, 490,000 persons exported 151,481 tons, averaging to each 692 lbs.; and that under the Haytean government, the whole island, containing, as is said, 935,335 persons, now exports only 16,365 tons, averaging to each the remarkably diminished amount of 39 lbs.

This gives a most distressing view of the idleness of the black population, while a comparative consideration of their imports affords a proof equally decisive of their poverty, as it appears that while for the slave population of Jamaica not less than the value of £3 each is yearly imported by their masters in clothing and other necessaries which the West Indies do not afford, the *whole* amount of the articles of foreign produce annually consumed in Hayti does not, according to the shewing of their own official documents, exceed the average of fourteen or fifteen shillings for each individual of all ranks. If this be true, the greater part of the inhabitants, although they may, in that tropical country, be able to procure food, must be utterly destitute of clothing.*

* I am quite aware that the accuracy of the documents from which I have taken the above statements, cannot be depended on, either as to the amount of population, or of exports and imports, and that the late Consul-General, Mr M'Kenzie, has made returns differing from these in many particulars. But his reports, which

Such is the condition of the free black population of Hayti, which, having emerged prematurely from a state of slavery, has not been able, in the course of more than forty years, though placed in the most fertile island of the western Archipelago, to procure for itself the comforts, or even the necessaries, of civilized society, and much less to make any effectual progress in moral and intellectual improvement.

I must not omit, however, to remark, that the argument, drawn from the state of Hayti, can extend no farther than to prove the necessity of a prudent and cautious policy, in effecting the emancipation of the Negroes. Many circumstances may be mentioned in the revolution of that Island, and its subsequent history, which must prevent the unhappy condition of its present inhabitants from being fairly adduced as militating against the gradual manumission of the slaves in our own colonies. The blacks in Hayti, as I have already remarked, waded to freedom through the blood of their masters. They were, at that period, nearly in the condition of our own negro population before the abolition of the slave trade. By far the greater proportion of them were native Africans, fresh from the barbarities of that uncivilized land, and swelling with savage vengeance for the oppressions of their self-constituted masters. To their own wild and brutal passions was

---

are also liable to be disputed, bring out a similar result, and I thought it best to adhere to returns which have at least the authority of official documents. It is impossible, at all events, with every allowance, to deny the fact, that the present state of Hayti is most deplorable.

added all the demoralizing influence of French revolutionary principles; and the movement,—sudden, sanguinary, and relentless,—which put them in possession not only of freedom, but of civil power, contributed, doubtless, to render their characters still more base and degenerate. It is not strange, then, that they were destined to undergo the dreadful ordeal of alternate license and oppression, and that a period of thirty years should have passed before they could begin to acquire the blessings of a regularly constituted government;—much less can it be matter of surprise that, even now, they are but commencing the career of improvement. The wonder, on the contrary, is, that their progress in the arts and principles of civilized society should be so considerable, as even its greatest detractors allow it actually to be. I am by no means sure, that, under such circumstances, a white population would not have exhibited a still more distressing spectacle of degradation and misery; and, while Hayti is justly held up as a beacon against precipitate measures, I confess the whole circumstances of its revolutionary history impress my mind with no mean view of the comparative intelligence and energy of the negro character, and hence confirm my prepossessions in favour of ultimate manumission.

Returning from this digression, however, it is more to our present purpose to observe, that the experiment made at Sierra Leone, chiefly for the express purpose of ascertaining the practicability of raising African slaves to the state of free labourers, so far from succeeding to any desirable extent, has resulted in the recommendation of the Commissioners that "a system of modi-

fied coerced labour should be introduced, in order to counteract the disposition to idleness, or the want of inclination to adopt habits of industry and useful pursuits found in the Africans."*

This speaks volumes against premature manumission, and nothing can be more true than the observation which you, Sir, are reported to have made last May in the House of Commons in adverting to this subject, that if the recommendation was founded on a correct view of the state of the colony, we were working in a circle, and, in endeavouring to give freedom to the blacks, were carrying them back to a system of slavery.

I have no hesitation in thinking that the same enlightened sentiments which led you to make this remark, must prevent you from forming any very sanguine opinion in favour of the present state of those colonies, which are under the direct control of government, where the experimental system has actually been introduced; for it appears from public documents that the plan is far from working well, and is not likely to produce, so soon as was expected, those advantages to the slave population that were anticipated. By this observation I must not, however, be understood to express any fear that the ultimate result of this system, under

---

* It must be owned, however, that even this example does not exactly apply to the present state of the West India negroes; for the uncultured condition of the blacks in Sierra Leone, is perpetuated by the constant importation of fresh savages from the captured slave vessels; and there has also, I fear, been much mismanagement in that colony, which has counteracted, very unnecessarily and unjustifiably, the benevolent intentions of the friends of the negroes.

such prudent and cautious management as yours, will fail to be beneficial. Meanwhile, it is well known, that throughout our West Indian possessions, the greater part of the free labourers and manumitted slaves have acquired indolent and dissolute habits. They are indeed said to be "almost entirely without property; for the most part either supported by their former masters, or living in an idle and worthless manner." Of the truth of this statement you must be well aware; but if it be doubted by others, I may refer, in confirmation of it, to the Fiscal of Demerara, who, in a letter addressed to the Commissioners of Inquiry, of date 21st January, 1829, remarks of liberated negroes in that settlement, that "the greater part of their time is passed in gambling, in strolling about the country, in committing petty thefts, and in idleness."

No person, I think, who impartially considers these facts, will venture to say that the slave population of the West Indies is, in its present condition, prepared for enjoying and profiting by the blessings of liberty. But it may be asked, if their state must be therefore considered hopeless and irretrievable? or, if we must trust to the humane and enlightened views of the slave-holders themselves, for the introduction of such a system of training and education, as may advance them in the scale of moral beings, and eventually fit them for acting their part as free members of civilized society? To the consideration of this important subject, I shall use the freedom to address myself in my next.

LETTER IV.

PROGRESSIVE IMPROVEMENT OF THE NEGRO RACE.

SIR,

FROM what I have already stated, I flatter myself you will think me warranted to conclude, that, although Christianity is, in its spirit and tendency, decidedly hostile to every kind of arbitrary power, yet it does not, by express statute, interfere with existing institutions; but, with a wisdom truly divine, leaves religion to work its resistless, though often silent and gentle way, and, by convincing the judgment and affecting the heart, gradually sheds over the face of society its substantial and enduring blessings, of a temporal, as well as of a spiritual nature. It follows from this, as a legitimate conclusion, that, when Christians find themselves in actual possession of slaves, they are not required instantly, and without inquiry into consequences, to break up the connection which has thus been formed between them and their fellow-men, as if that connection were, under

all circumstances, sinful; but, on the contrary, that they are constrained by duty to consider themselves, as respects these dependants, placed in a situation of the highest responsibility, and charged by Providence with the care, not merely of their worldly comfort and advantage, but of their intellectual improvement, and of their moral and religious education. If immediate manumission be inconsistent with such objects, it is plainly inconsistent with the Christian obligation of masters; and therefore, so far from being required, may safely be regarded as forbidden, by the spirit of our holy religion. But that it is inconsistent with such objects I persuade myself was proved in my last, when I shewed that the negro population is, at present, altogether unfit for liberty, and would, by being turned loose on society, be materially injured, both as regards their temporal and spiritual interests.

I am thus led to take a view of their present condition, for the purpose of considering to what extent those interests are actually consulted, and what prospect there is of their ultimate preparation for being admitted to the rights and privileges of civilized society.

The final abolition of the slave trade, as respects our colonies, was the commencement of a new era to those unhappy Africans and their descendants, who had previously been subjected to the yoke of British masters. Before that period, I believe, the system of slavery was altogether revolting; and I would willingly cast a veil over it, were it not necessary to go back to the original state of the black population, that we may the better estimate the nature and extent of the amelioration which is now in progress.

This is the more necessary, on account of the ten-

dency which has evinced itself in ardent minds, to lose sight of what has already been effected, in the consideration of the important objects which yet remain to be attained, and thus to form on the subject an altogether perverted and inadequate opinion. It may be quite true, that, when considered positively, as to the intrinsic value of their attainments, or relatively, in comparison with the improved and enlightened state of the whites among whom they dwell, the negroes are in a most lamentable condition of degradation and barbarism; and yet, when their present situation in these respects is contrasted with that in which they were placed but a few years before, the improvements which have been made among them, may be found to be remarkable and satisfactory; and it is obviously by the estimate of this progress alone, that their real condition, both with reference to the present and to the future, can be truly judged. Were we to find them in possession of a degree of civilization much superior to what they have actually attained, but retrograding, or even stationary, we should have reason to pronounce their situation far more hopeless, than if, though in point of present acquirements greatly inferior, they were in the act of pushing forward in the path of melioration.

It is necessary, therefore, to look back to the period before the abolition. And what do we see? Truth compels me to answer,—a system of unmitigated slavery.

By far the greatest part of the blacks were *imported* Africans, for, from whatever reason, few negro children were then reared. These generally consisted, as I have already said, of warriors taken captive in battle, and included all ranks, from the native bondman to the haughty and independent chief. It is easy to conceive,

that, out of such untractable materials, to create bands of serviceable drudges, would be no holiday task. To hold their reins loosely, was ruinous—to drive them gently and rule with kindness, required, to say the least, more skill and Christian forbearance, than fell to the lot of many masters, or could be expected of the kind of overseers actually employed. The only instrument with which the backs of the savage and refractory crew were bent to the yoke—I speak generally—was a rod of iron.* To their daily toil they were driven with the lash; with the lash they were goaded on beyond their strength; with the lash even a rebellious look was terribly avenged; and other tortures more dreadful still, awaited those whose proud spirits the lash could not subdue. It is not, I fear, too much to say, that they were treated with less humanity than if they had been mere beasts of burden. The lower animals, when stubborn and indocile, are spared even by a brutal master, because they are of an inferior species, irresistibly impelled by the instincts of their nature. But the negroes —however mean the estimate which may have been made of their intellectual and moral characters—were still acknowledged to be men. They could understand the orders of their superior—they could reason against these orders—they could rebel in their hearts—they could harbour revenge.

---

* I wish it to be distinctly understood, that when I speak either here or elsewhere, in such strong terms of the horrors to which the slaves were subjected, I describe the general bearing of the system, and mean not to reflect on individuals; well knowing as I do, that among the slave owners even of the period to which I now refer, there were many amiable men and humane masters.

How much these qualities, by exciting the bad passions of the overseers, if not of the slave-owners themselves, aggravated the miserable condition of the negroes, I do not pretend to determine. It is enough to know, that whatever effect self-interest or a more laudable sentiment may have had, in counteracting such incentives to cruelty, and in providing for the bodily health and comfort of the blacks, no attempt, during the period of which I am now speaking, was ever made, except perhaps in a very few isolated cases, to instruct their minds or to open their eyes to the truths of revealed religion. On the contrary, there was a deliberate plan, as I have already noticed, to exclude them from all the lights of civilization, and from all participation in the hopes of Christianity. This was the crying and intolerable iniquity of West Indian slavery, which rendered the system altogether unhallowed and anti-christian, and which characterised it as one of the foulest stains that ever blotted the pages of history, since the gospel shed it benign influence over civilized society.

But that dark period of colonial policy is now passed, or at least is rapidly passing away—I trust for ever. Since the abolition of what has been justly called the detestable traffic in human flesh, there has no longer existed a ready market, where the waste of negro life could be supplied more cheaply and rapidly than by the process of rearing from the birth; and, without meaning any severe reflection on the former management of the planters, or even of their overseers and agents, I must be allowed to say that this circumstance alone made a most material and a highly fa-

vourable change in the condition of the slaves. It became necessary, for the very existence of the West Indies as a productive country, that the black population, by whose labour the soil was cultivated, should be protected and cherished; the value of slaves was suddenly so enhanced that they could scarcely be purchased for money; and hence the prosperity of a proprietor came now to depend much more on the number and sound condition of the negroes he happened to possess, than on the extent of his estate, or the natural richness of the soil. The interest of the planters under these new circumstances powerfully co-operated with their humanity, in inducing them to attend to the health and comfort of their negro dependants, as well as to the rearing of children,—from which latter source alone they could ultimately hope to extend or even to keep up the cultivation of their property. The promiscuous intercourse of the sexes was therefore discouraged. Permanent marriages, which were previously altogether unknown, began to be earnestly recommended, and rewarded with peculiar marks of favour. Separate houses were built for parents of families, and allotments of land, proportioned to their wants and industry, were assigned to them;—the personal property acquired by slaves came to be more generally respected, and many privileges, formerly unknown, were gradually conceded to them, first by general consent, and afterwards by express statute. Punishments became more rare and less cruelly inflicted; and a council of protection was appointed to attend to the complaints of the slaves, by which the tyranny of masters and subordinate agents was materially restrained. Thus the outward condi-

tion of this degraded race has, in a very few years, been remarkably improved, and a salutary impulse having once been given in this direction, their improvement can scarcely fail to proceed in an increasing ratio.

But it is not to the mere bodily comfort of the negroes that the attention of their masters has been turned. A no less extraordinary change has taken place in regard to their moral and religious welfare. The Creole or native slaves have been trained under the eye of those whose interest it was to prevent them from acquiring the savage and dissolute manners which characterised the imported Africans, and who entertained towards them more kindly feelings, arising partly from a natural regard for what has been reared and nourished by one's self, and partly also from a general change of sentiments among the whites with respect to the reciprocal duties of master and slave. The effects of this training are distinctly visible in the mental improvement of the Creole race. They are altogether different from their parents in their manners and sentiments. Many of them can read and even write; they have all begun to despise the superstitions of Africa, and to long for instruction;—the practice of necromancy, under the name of Obeah, which took so fatal a hold on the imaginations of these ignorant people, has almost ceased to be known; and what is more, the encouragement now given to their religious instruction, and the means provided for this purpose by the whites, scanty and inadequate as it has hitherto been, has been warmly seconded by their own inclinations; and a reformation of principles and manners, at once rapid and sincere, is spreading among them to an ex-

tent which, a few years ago, could not have been believed.

I trust you will not think me unnecessarily tedious, if, in my next, I continue this subject, by entering somewhat more into detail, with regard to the improved sentiments and conduct both of masters and slaves. Meanwhile, I think I cannot better conclude this letter than by quoting from the very judicious publication of a gentleman, who was lately, and for 21 years, resident in Jamaica, a passage in which he enumerates some of the changes that have taken place in the condition of the negroes, and some of the ameliorations in the slave laws:—

"At no very distant period, when savage Africans were pouring into Jamaica, and while there were yet but few natives or creoles, the master's power of punishing his slaves was little restrained by law; and was exercised to a great extent by the subordinate white people, and by the drivers. It is now limited to 30 stripes, to be inflicted by order, and in presence of the master or overseer, and 10 by subordinate agents; and, comparatively speaking, is but seldom required at all. There is not now one punishment for twenty that were inflicted 15 or 20 years ago.

"Ten years ago, chains were in common use on the plantations, for punishing criminal slaves; the use of them is now entirely abolished.

"Twenty years ago, there was scarcely a negro baptised in Jamaica; now they are nearly all baptised.

"Twenty years ago, the churches were scarcely at all attended by the slaves; since then the number of churches, or places of worship of one kind or other, has been more than doubled, in fact nearly trebled; and yet, in the districts where I have had an opportunity of seeing them, they are all fully attended, and principally by slaves.

"Twenty years ago, negroes were buried at midnight, and the funeral rites, in the forms of African superstition, were the occasion of continual excesses among those who attended. Negroes

are now buried during the day, and in the same manner as the white people.

"Ten years ago, the marriage rite was altogether unknown among the slaves. The number now married is not inconsiderable, and is fast increasing.

"While the importation of Africans was continued, the practice of Obeah was common and destructive; it is now seldom heard of.

"The working of sugar-mills encroached on Sunday during crop; it is now prohibited by law, and Sunday is strictly a day of rest.

"Formerly the negroes cultivated their grounds on Sundays—White persons were even sent to superintend them. Now they have by law 26 working days in the year for this purpose. Every manager must swear that he has given them this number of days; and no slaves now work at their ground on Sunday, but such as are more inclined to make money than to attend church.

"When the abolition of the African trade took place, a large proportion of the slaves were newly-imported Africans, maintained with provisions raised or bought by the master, or lodged with other slaves, who had grounds which they assisted in cultivating. Now, the plantation slaves in Jamaica have all houses of their own, and grounds of their own; and are in every respect more comfortable and independent. They form more steady connections, pay more attention to their families in the way of keeping them clean and dressing them neatly: and, in short, have acquired more taste and desire for domestic enjoyments.

"Manumissions were at one time burdened with heavy taxes; they are now perfectly free.

"For cruel or improper punishments slaves had formerly no adequate redress; now they are manumised and provided with an annuity for life; and magistrates are appointed a council of protection to attend to their complaints.

"Formerly the trial of slaves was, I believe, by parole, and the power of death was entrusted to the slave courts, who could order the criminal to immediate execution; now the whole evidence and conviction must be transmitted to the governor; and, unless in cases of rebellion, the sentence cannot be carried into execution without his warrant.

"For ten slaves that were executed twenty years ago, there is not now more than one, and I think not even that proportion.

"Twenty years ago, the coasting vessels of Jamaica were almost exclusively manned with slaves. From the increase of the free population, the coasting vessels are now more commonly manned with freemen.

The operative mechanics about towns, carpenters, ship-builders, &c., were mostly slaves: This description of work is now performed principally by free people of colour.

"A few years ago, marriage was unknown among the free people of colour: It is now becoming common; and many of them are careful to preserve the sanctity of the institution.

"The number of free persons in Jamaica in 1787 was estimated at only 10,000: It is now 35,000, and rapidly increasing by manumissions as well as by births.

"These few particulars will convey but a very inadequate idea of the progress made by the negroes, and how superior a people they are in every respect to what they were when the slave trade was abolished in 1807. But if, as Mr Stephen observes, 'every mitigation of slavery is a step towards freedom,' this brief statement may be sufficient to shew that progress is making towards it."*

---

* Barclay's Practical View of the Present State of Slavery in the West Indies, &c.

LETTER V.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

SIR,

THE causes to which I alluded in my last, of the very remarkable improvement in the condition of the black population of our colonies, were, chiefly, the absence of that contaminating influence which arose from the constant importation of untamed and untameable savages from the shores of Africa, and the necessity under which the planters were laid, by the cessation of all external supplies, to cherish the slaves already subjected to their power, and turn their attention to a source, hitherto almost entirely overlooked—the propagation of the negro race on their own estates.

It is obvious that these causes alone must have powerfully operated in promoting the comforts and domestic habits of that enthralled people, and in advancing them in the scale of society. But there are other causes which, in no trifling degree, have co-operated with these, and have given them a moral

power, and a principle of permanency not naturally inherent in them. Among these, must be mentioned as the most influential, a salutary change in the moral character and habits of the slaveholders and their agents. The human mind, though it cannot be called the creature of circumstances, is at least strongly affected by them. The temptations, which formerly existed, for exercising over the imported slaves a rigorous and cruel system of coercion, while it justified that system in the eyes of selfish and grasping men, brutalized their dispositions, and deadened them, I fear, to the perception of moral and religious truth. They were in a distant land, too, removed from the kindly influences of those social and domestic relations, and from the pervading power of that Christian feeling, which shed such a charm over society in their native country, and which, working often with an unseen hand, find their way to every heart, softening and moulding the character of the whole community. In these transatlantic islands, to which, with imaginations glowing with visions of future wealth and enjoyment, they had voluntarily expatriated themselves, they were introduced to new scenes, new associates, and new principles of action—all of them alluring, and, I grieve to say, demoralizing. Among the whites they found men, though doubtless with many honourable exceptions, whom a supposed necessity had rendered hard and unfeeling in the treatment of their numerous dependants, and with whom, while the most dissolute manners were without reproach, oppression was held to be an indispensable duty. In the negroes, they found a debased, an unprincipled, and frequently an untractable race, to whom they stood

in such a relation as gave free scope at once to the most debauched habits, and the most brutal passions of their nature. The effects of such a trying situation were, generally speaking, such as might have been expected; and the system of colonial slavery, at the period to which I now refer, was marked among the planters and their agents, for I do not at present speak of the mercantile part of the community, with a character to which I am unwilling to give a name.

The change which the last twenty years has in this, as in other respects, effected, though far from being complete, is yet, as far as it goes, highly satisfactory. The planters, from being the tyrants, are rapidly becoming the benevolent protectors of their slaves. They have not only imbibed more liberal views of their own interest, but have actually become a more moral, and I would gladly hope, too, a more religious body than they ever were before. The progress of society at home —the influence of public opinion which has been so strongly directed towards the colonies—the interference of Parliament—and other causes partly connected with the personal character of the great proprietors, some of which might be called fortuitous, if any thing under the superintending care of Providence could be so considered—have combined to bring about this desirable result.

Nor is the change confined to the planters;—it extends, in almost an equal degree, to their agents. On this subject, it will be more proper to allow an author to speak, who, himself, went through all the gradations of a planter's life, from the situation of a book-keeper,

to that of a manager, if not a proprietor, and who describes the state of West India Society, with some natural softening perhaps, but, upon the whole, with a moderation and good feeling which reflect credit on his character, and give weight to his statements.

"The better observance of Sunday, and attendance at Church," says he, "is not confined to the slaves, but applies equally to the whole community, and is but a part of a general improvement that has taken place in the character and condition of all classes within the last fifteen years: an improvement which, I have no hesitation to say, may challenge comparison in magnitude with anything on record in any country. The causes which have produced so great a change deserve investigation. In the houses of overseers of the present day, there is a sobriety, good order, and decorum, so entirely different from what prevailed twenty or twenty-five years ago, as can scarcely be believed by those who have not seen it. I have heard this attributed, and I think not improperly, to those circumstances in the mother country, which favoured the extension of education; and particularly to the great advance which took place in the value of farm produce after the breaking out of the late war, which enabled the middle classes in Scotland, and the north of Ireland, whence Jamaica is principally supplied with its white population, to give a better education to their families than they had previously done; and to send more of them abroad. The consequence was, that, about that period, a class of young men sought their fortunes in the colonies, much superior to the indented servants, who were before sent out by agents, and to those adventurers, frequently carried out on speculation, in ship loads, for sale to whoever would pay their passage. That this is one cause, which, unperceived, like the silent hand of time, has had a very favourable influence, no one will deny. These young men, at first book-keepers, became overseers, and many of them are now deservedly in the confidence of the proprietors, as managers of their estates. The influence of the overseer, correct in his own conduct, kind to his book-keepers, while he exacts from them that attention to duty, of which they see an example in himself, has naturally a powerful effect upon them, and even upon the

slaves, who are much influenced by the persons in authority over them, so much so, that it is proverbial among them, '*Good massa make good nigger.*'"*

At the risk of being accused of quoting too copiously, I feel impelled to add some further highly appropriate, though probably, like the previous passage, somewhat too favourable, observations of the same author.

"Other causes have also contributed to produce the change in question. Proprietors, with scarcely an exception, so far as my knowledge goes, in their instructions to their managers, have expressed an anxious desire that the comfort and happiness of their people should be made a paramount object.

"The legislature has also acted upon the same humane and liberal principles, and in the slave codes of 1809 and 1816, some excellent regulations, which had previously been adopted by the more liberal, were made imperative upon all. New and extensive privileges were granted to free persons of colour; the arbitrary punishment of slaves was restrained, and taken almost entirely out of the hands of subordinate agents; the working of sugar mills, which had previously encroached so far on Sunday, that it was scarcely felt as a day of rest by either the white people or the negroes, was forbidden from seven o'clock on Saturday evening till five on Monday morning; magistrates were appointed a council of protection to attend to the complaints of the slaves, &c.

"These, and many other excellent regulations of the same kind, seemed rather to follow than lead public opinion, upon which a great change had been effected, by the introduction of a better educated class of white people—by the abolition of the slave trade, and discussions attendant thereon; and by the greater means of religious instruction afforded by the curates and missionaries."†

It would be easy and pleasant to enlarge on this subject, but I flatter myself that enough has already been said to shew the nature and magnitude of the improvements which have taken place, within a very few years,

* Barclay, pp. 225-6. † Ib., pp. 127-8.

in the views and moral character of the white population, as well as in the general condition of their negro dependants. That these improvements must have a reciprocal effect, creating in the freeman a strong and increasing spirit of kindliness towards his slave, and, in the slave, not only greater attachment and fidelity towards his master, but also more enlightened sentiments, and greater cultivation of mind, cannot, I think, be doubted; and, in the progress of this state of rapid melioration, there seems to be no resting place, till it end in general manumission—as freely granted by the slave masters, whose interest, not less than their duty, it will become, as it will be acceptable and advantageous to a respectable, attached, and industrious negro population.

In arriving at this conclusion, I have particular regard to the work of religious tuition which you, Sir, are well aware is now going on among the slaves with extraordinary success.

Formerly, as I have observed in a previous letter, the proprietors had a decided aversion to the instruction of their slaves in the principles of Christianity; and their conduct, in this respect, formed the worst feature in the system of oppression which was then so general. But an entirely new view has of late been taken on this important subject; which, however, has, I fear, in many instances, led to the opposite extreme, by countenancing an abuse of the sacred rite of baptism, which no true Christian can justify. The negroes are, in general, exceedingly desirous to throw away their African superstitions and prejudices, and to be admitted within the pale of the Christian church. But

among many of them, this is anything but the result of enlightened or pious views. On the contrary, to be baptized is merely regarded among the more ignorant, as a step in the scale of society, by an introduction into some of the privileges belonging to the whites, to whom they are taught to look up as a superior race. This view, however, happens to correspond with the present policy of their masters, and I see but too unequivocal symptoms of its having given rise to rash and unwarrantable admissions to the baptismal font, for which the clergy are still more reprehensible than the masters. The negroes, on whole plantations, have been baptised *at once*, with scarcely any previous preparation by religious instruction, or at best, with a preparation which must be characterised as exceedingly defective and superficial—as indeed a mere mockery of Christian education. This cannot be denied, when it is known, that in Jamaica, as well as in other islands, there is, at this moment, scarcely a single negro, whether native African or Creole, who has not been baptised; and when yet it is confessed, that vast numbers of them are still in a state of the deepest ignorance and the most deplorable debasement of mind and of principles. Independent of the religious duty most shamefully compromised by this precipitancy, it is much to be lamented on account of the opportunity which has thus been lost, of conveying to the slaves the knowledge and the genuine spirit of the gospel, along with its outward forms, and of raising among them the general tone of moral and religious feeling, by drawing a broad line of distinction between the initiated and the uninitiated.

But, while this error must be viewed with the most marked disapprobation, the altered opinions which it indicates, cannot but afford a cheering prospect to those who have at heart the real welfare of the working classes in our colonies. It unequivocally shews that a triumph of no trifling nature has been gained over the prejudices of the whites, which must lead to the most salutary practical results. If the whites are at all consistent with themselves, no obstacles can any longer be thrown in the way of the instruction of the negroes, except such as may arise from a natural jealousy as to the prudence and competency of the instructor—a jealousy which may indeed be frequently ill-founded and hurtful, but which will certainly yield to a system of judicious and enlightened management on the part of Government, and of those religious societies who have turned their benevolent attention to this highly important object. The great barrier is broken down; and as certainly as a well taught and religious population is more peaceable and more docile, more intelligent, and more moral, more amiable, industrious and trustworthy, than an ignorant, savage, and unprincipled rabble, so certainly will the system of Christian instruction prevail and become universal.

The progress, indeed, which that system has already made, notwithstanding the deep-rooted prejudices and prepossesions transmitted from more unhappy times, is quite wonderful. Mr. Barclay, whose work was published in February, 1828, and who tells us that he left Jamaica about 18 months before, describes the black and coloured population of that island, as even then crowding to places of worship in a manner altogether

unexampled at any previous period, and imbibing a rapidly increasing relish for religious truth. Since that period the work of conversion has been going on in a still increasing ratio, and in a manner still more satisfactory. The Episcopal church establishment, with its bishops at its head, which, ever since the western colonies were divided into dioceses, has been assuming a much more active and efficient attitude, has made great and well-directed efforts to spread the knowledge of the gospel among all classes of the people; and, by the founding and superintendence of schools and places of worship, by the institution of catechetical examinations and diets of visitation, as well as by other useful and pious arrangements, has contributed its part to the improvement of the negro race; while missionaries, sent from religious bodies in the mother country, and benevolent private Christians or their agents, have prosecuted the same object with the most extraordinary success.

For the truth of this, I might appeal to the reports contained in missionary publications, which can no longer be considered as a suspected source, since the intelligence conveyed in them is confirmed by all who are acquainted with the state of our colonies;—but I feel rather inclined, at present, to quote one or two passages from the private letters of a young but intelligent and excellent friend of my own, now residing in the West Indies, and actively engaged in promoting both the temporal and spiritual interests of the slaves; because on his veracity I have the strongest personal reasons for placing implicit confidence. Though these letters were written at intervals, between November, 1828,

and September, 1829, I shall, to prevent repetition and prolixity, run together in one paragraph the information which I extract:—

"To a religious mind, Jamaica presents a most animating prospect. On all sides the work of conversion is going on. My time is much spent in moving about among the properties I have the charge of. I like the management much. It is all conducted on Christian principles:—No oppression,—no attempt to keep the negroes in ignorance. Marriages are multiplying—the Sunday congregations are enlarging, and the Sunday Schools are well attended. It is a delightful sight to see the little negro children, who have been taught to read, winningly and affectionately endeavouring to instruct their ignorant parents. The chapel, on Sundays, presents a truly interesting sight. Not satisfied with instructing the negroes on our own estates, we invade the territcries of our neighbours. By circulating tracts, spelling-books, &c., and by entreaties, we endeavour to entice the adjoining negroes into our religious toils. An ardent desire to learn to read is thus awakened in the minds of those who do not already enjoy that advantage; and nothing but a system of plain education among the slaves will save the land. The feeling of this community is much changed. A leaven of Christian principle has gone abroad, that is makiug a wondrous impression. Tumult and rebellion I fear not; there is too much Bible reading."

It is impossible to read these extracts—with which I have only taken such liberties as were necessary to connect them together—without being at once astonished and delighted with the changes which are in progress in Jamaica; especially as these may be taken as a fair, though somewhat favourable, specimen of the state of the whole British colonies in the Western Archipelago. It must, however, be confessed, that the animating accounts I have just quoted, refer chief-

ly to a few estates, belonging to individuals imbued with Christian principles, which are placed under the management of a gentleman of similar views. But this is no solitary experiment; and, when we consider the state of the negroes and the prepossessions of proprietors, only a few years ago, it is impossible not to think it much, that the experiment is made at all—and still more, that it succeeds. A few more such experiments and the point is gained. It will appear, in the islands of the Atlantic, as it has already so abundantly appeared in those of the Pacific Ocean, that to Christianize a savage race is to civilize them, and to render them estimable and useful members of society; and it will then be proved to be the worldly interest of every slave-holder, not merely to *baptize* his negroes, but to instruct them in Christian principles. Nor do I conceive that you can consider it in any degree Utopian to entertain the expectation at which I have already hinted, that this altered state of the black population will lead to their voluntary manumission. The reasons for entertaining this expectation shall be shortly stated in my next.

LETTER VI.

PERIOD ADVANCING WHEN EMANCIPATION WILL BECOME THE INTEREST OF THE PLANTERS.

SIR,

IN my last, I intimated my conviction, that if the negroes continue for a few years longer to improve as rapidly as they have begun, their complete emancipation will be generally felt to be a measure not merely required by duty, but distinctly dictated by a regard to the interests of the proprietors themselves. The necessity of hastening to other views, prevents me from entering so fully on this subject, as its importance to my argument might render desirable; but before leaving it, I may be indulged in one or two cursory observations.

The more directly the stimulus of personal interest can be applied to labour, the greater, confessedly, will be the energies of body and mind called forth, and the more expeditiously and completely will the task be performed. Hence, the difference in expedition and dexterity, between working by the job and working by

the day, has long been proverbial in this country; and, on a similar principle, still greater, doubtless, must be the difference, between working by the day, and drudging in the unwilling and heartless toil of slaves. In New South Wales, we find a striking illustration of this well known principle. There, the convicts are in a state of bondage, and their compulsory labour is not merely employed in carrying on public works, but is (or at least used to be) very frequently granted by the local government, for a specified time, to private individuals. Their hours of compelled service, however, are limited to a certain number each day; and it frequently happens that the agriculturists and others, who have thus been supplied with convict labourers, engage them after the expiration of their task, to work under them for hire. Here, we have the very same individuals employed as *slaves* during the first part of the day, when they are fresh and vigorous; and as *freemen* in the evening, when they might be expected to have exhausted their strength by previous toil. The consequence is too marked to have escaped the observation of any one who ever visited that distant colony. In the morning, they are lazy, spiritless, and stubborn to such a degree, that scarcely any strictness of superintendance or coercion can render their work an equivalent for their maintenance, and, to make the boon worth acceptance, government rations must be added to supply them with food. But, when their period of forced service is over, many of these unprofitable bondmen change their character, and become all at once active and intelligent servants. The head and heart now go along with their work, and their employer finds himself

scarcely less a gainer during the interval in which he pays them high wages, than during that in which their labour is unremunerated, and their subsistence provided out of the public stores.

This fact, which is readily accounted for on the principles of human nature, places in a strong light the advantage of *free* over *constrained* labour; but there is another consideration which must be taken into account before we can see the subject in its proper point of view. Such is the natural condition of the labouring classes in every variety of situation, that, as the political economist has demonstrated, and experience has confirmed, they cannot be expected to earn more, taken on an average, than is sufficient to supply them with the common necessaries of life. In countries where slavery is unknown, these classes obtain their subsistence by wages in return for work; while in such places as the West Indies, the labourers, although in bondage, must still receive the means of support from those for whom they labour—not indeed in the form of wages, but, what is scarcely less expensive, in the form of food and clothing. The chief difference lies in this, that in the one case there is a reciprocal agreement, on the principle of mutual interest, which inspires the employed with alacrity and zeal; in the other, this reciprocity is awanting—the labour is compelled by brute force, and though subsistence is afforded to the labourer, it is not as a remuneration, but merely as the means of keeping him alive and vigorous for the service of his master. Now this difference is essential; as, by taking from the slave all sense of personal interest in his work, and thus destroying the chief spring of action, it gives

to free labour an advantage almost incalculable. Indeed, I am persuaded that there is scarcely a planter in our colonies who is not ready to acknowledge, that, could he only depend on the industry and fidelity of the negroes, it would contribute greatly to his benefit to manumit them, and pay them a fair price for their voluntary services.

But here precisely lies the objection. It is alleged that the negro race are by nature so lazy and stupid—so prone to low indulgences, and so little capable of being actuated by the stimulus of honourable ambition—that, if compulsion were removed at any future period, and even after every probable improvement in their character, they would cease to be industrious. The yearly work of a few days, it is said, would suffice to supply them, in that fertile climate, with a bare subsistence; and they would look for no more. Thus they would become altogether inefficient as a body of labourers, the soil would remain uncultivated, and the planters would be ruined.

I must be allowed to demur to this conclusion. Although not personally acquainted with the character and habits of the blacks, I know that they are men, and must therefore be actuated by human motives. It is true that they are at present reluctant and inactive workmen; but so are the whites, as we have seen, when driven to the field and labouring like beasts of burden by compulsion. It is true, also, that their minds are now degraded and their habits grovelling, and that, if immediately freed from the yoke, this unhappy character might long cleave to them; but would the whites, if placed for generations in their condition, be less abject? It is said,

however, that experience has decided the question against the labour of negroes, as they have been found, when emancipated, to retain all the inactive and spiritless dispositions which characterized them in a state of slavery. But will it be gravely asserted that the experiment has been fairly made? Are not even the free blacks of our Western colonies in a state of hopeless degradation? They are nominally at liberty; but have they not hitherto been jealously excluded from acquiring station in the circle of civilized society, and thus deprived of some of the most powerful motives for active exertion?

I am by no means sure, however, that even the partial experience which has been afforded, gives countenance to an unfavourable conclusion against the natural intelligence and enterprise of the negro character. It is well known that most of the handicraftsmen and artizans of the West Indies are either free negroes or free persons of colour; and amongst these, notwithstanding the discouragements under which they labour, are to be found a sufficient number of men of industry and ingenuity, to wipe away the opprobrium which has been attempted to be fixed on them, of great native inferiority in mental and bodily energy.*

I recur, therefore, to my former proposition—that if the improvement begun in the character and condition

* Symptoms, indeed, of rapid progress in knowledge and civilization are multiplying among the free people of colour. In Jamaica a periodical publication has lately been established for behoof of that class, conducted, I believe, by individuals of their own body, which manifests a very fair portion of talent and cultivation.

of the negroes shall proceed, but for a few years longer, with the rapidity with which it has commenced, the period must arrive when the manumission of the slaves will become the acknowledged interest of their masters; and may therefore possibly be effected without the compulsory interference of the legislature at home; but, if otherwise, such a state of negro society will, at all events, remove the only legitimate plea for holding that race any longer in bondage.

To accelerate this happy period, however, the benevolent exertions of the community can and ought to do much. It is the duty of Parliament, and of the executive government, to watch with a paternal, I do not say a jealous eye, over the interests of their negro subjects; to advance, by every gentle means in their power, their instruction in useful knowledge, and, above all, their moral and religious education; and to take care that no baneful influence shall arise in any quarter, to retard the work of amelioration.

I cannot indeed venture to recommend *compulsory interference*, so long as it is possible, by other means, to effect the great object in view; and, in the present state of our colonies, I would gladly hope that we need not anticipate the probable occurrence of any circumstances which could render direct interference advisable. What *has* to be done is now in progress, and the impulse already given is too strong to be easily stopped, or even materially retarded. The white and the black population are alike carried along by it, and nothing but the rude hand of power, injudiciously applied, is likely to prevent it from conducting to the

desired result. The slave-masters themselves, are undoubtedly the best judges of what improvements the present condition of the negroes will bear, and were they once freed from remaining prejudice, and hearty in the cause of gradual emancipation, would be the surest and the safest guides in this difficult question. Some of them are religious, and many of them are at least benevolent men. These are, from principle and feeling, led to make experiments, each in his own way, to ascertain how far, and by what means, the improvement of their negro dependents can be safely conducted. Hitherto they have found, and I doubt not they will continue to find, that to instruct them and treat them with kindness, is in reality to advance their own worldly interests. Others, though not animated with the same generous sentiments, are yet sufficiently acute to observe, and sufficiently alive to their personal advantage to turn to their own profit, the successful experiments of their better principled neighbours. They may disbelieve and resist and scoff for a time, but the truth will at last force itself on their prejudiced minds, and they will follow, though perhaps somewhat tardily, in the train.

But let it never be forgotten, that the state of our colonies, during the progress of this experiment, is precarious; and that a premature though well-meant interference, by the mother country, might be attended with the most fatal consequences. A transition is in the act of taking place, from a state of society, in which the few govern the many by the strong hand of force, to that more advanced state, in which the many emerg-

ing from their ignorance, learn their own power, and cause their voice to be heard by the few. Such a transition is always dangerous, though, when the change has once been effected, it is highly salutary. The principles by which society are held together in the two cases are altogether different; and it requires a nice and discriminating hand to adjust these principles to existing circumstances. In the one case, the great mass of the people must be blindfolded, that they may be coerced; in the other, having cast away their bandages, they must be gently conducted by the light of civilization, and above all, of religion; and thus, as the Scripture strikingly expresses it—"wisdom and knowledge" will become "the *stability* of their times." The difficulty lies, as I have said, in the transition. When the light first breaks in on eyes, which have long been held in unnatural darkness, it dazzles and misleads; and the excesses to which it may give rise, are dreadful to contemplate. Now, the black population of the West Indies is precisely in this situation; and nothing can require more delicacy and prudence than the management of such a crisis. To this task, a distant authority, which can, at best, be but partially informed, and which is liable to be guided by feeling and theory, rather than by judgment and experience, is scarcely competent; and, therefore, do I earnestly deprecate a rash legislation at home.

Something, however, the government of the mother country can safely and consistently effect. First of all, by adopting a specific and conciliatory line of conduct, they may re-assure the colonists, and establish a mutual understanding, which cannot fail to be produc-

tive of the happiest consequences. At present, I fear, matters are not in this satisfactory state. Parliamentary measures, called for by the voice of the nation, have been adopted, which have at once alarmed the fears of the slave-holders, and roused their angry passions. A spirit of resistance has manifested itself, where, above all things, it was desirable to excite a spirit of friendly co-operation; and an unhappy contest has taken place, between two bodies, altogether disproportioned, indeed, in point of physical strength; but, so far as the real interests of the negroes are concerned, both equally capable of doing irreparable mischief. Were they to meet each other in the kindly spirit of mutual concession, and to go hand in hand, in effecting what is called for, not more by the benevolence of the one party than by the interest of the other, all would yet be well. There would be little to retract on either side, but something to forget, and much to soften and adjust. On the one part, the haughtiness of power would fall to be restrained, and on the other, the indignant feeling excited by a sense, whether just or unjust, of unprovoked aggression and invaded rights.

It cannot be necessary, Sir, to impress on your liberal mind a truth which the steps you have already begun to take, convince me you are aware of, that a conduct, on the part of government, dignified, as might become its character, but calm, straight-forward, and frank, would, at this moment, have the most salutary influence. The West India body, both at home and abroad, harrassed by unfriendly sentiments, perplexed by adverse markets and oppressive taxes, and terrified by threats of the forcible and unremunerated manu-

mission of their slaves, are at present in a state of despair. They know not which way to turn themselves, and are too sensible how much they depend for their very existence on the good will of their native country, not to desire conciliation. Many of them, too, are men of high honour and patriotism, who deeply feel the disgrace of being regarded by their fellow-citizens with an evil eye, and are most anxious to wipe off the stigma with which they have been branded, as the oppressors of the negro race. Let the olive branch be held out to them, and with open arms they will doubtless meet the wishes of his Majesty's government, so far as, in their opinion, they can be met with a regard to personal safety.

One thing, when speaking on this subject, I must not omit, though I feel that I tread on delicate ground:—I allude to the feeble and vacillating attitude in which successive cabinets have placed themselves, relative to the West India question,—an attitude which, you will permit me to state, cannot yet be said to have been materially changed by our present rulers, though, I trust, they have not deliberately adopted it. Instead of meeting the difficulties of the subject boldly and manfully, as was befitting in the directors of a great nation, and as the interests, not merely of our colonies, but of the whole community imperiously demanded, they have shrunk from the responsibility which firm and decided measures would have incurred, protracting the time, and endeavouring to shelter themselves from the odium of either party, by encouraging the abolitionists and the anti-abolitionists to fight their own battles. This policy has already

been attended with much evil, and can no longer be persisted in, without the most ruinous consequences. Scarcely any measures, however erroneous, if firmly and consistently pursued, could lead to more distressing results. Mercantile confidence has been undermined—colonial produce has ceased to bring a remunerating price—the value of West India property has declined till it has become almost unsaleable—and a general gloom, accompanied with irritation, prevails throughout the colonies. A little longer, and if such a course be continued, the West Indies will fall into utter desolation.

But I trust the time is at last come, when a steady and unwavering hand will be applied to this subject. The Premier who could brave the difficulties of the Irish question, can have no misgivings in encountering that of the West Indies. Let him, with your aid, and seconded by the favourable wishes of every liberal-minded man in the kingdom, take it up in his own manly and uncompromising but conciliatory spirit, with the view to the restoration of colonial prosperity, and the final settlement of the system, and we may yet hope for better days to the inhabitants of these Trans-Atlantic islands, to whatever race they belong, and by whatever colour they are distinguished.

LETTER VII.

DUTY OF GOVERNMENT.

Sir,

Towards the end of my last letter, I took notice of the great error, of which former administrations appear to me to have been guilty, in not meeting the West India question boldly and decisively—an error from which you, and the other members of His Majesty's present government, cannot be held as altogether exempt, since you have certainly hitherto made little effort to place matters in a better train. As I have great confidence, however, both in the wisdom and firmness of that administration of which you are a member, I trust that this line of conduct, so different from the usual character of our present rulers, has arisen not from any settled purpose, but from the pressure of other momentous questions, which has rendered it convenient to delay the serious consideration of this, till these should be disposed of. If so, we may now confidently look for the adoption of a safer and more enlightened policy.

The first symptom of so happy a change in the system will probably be the consent of government to a committee of inquiry on colonial affairs.* It is, indeed, surprising that this measure has never yet been adopted; and such an omission can only be accounted for by the unwillingness of our rulers to meet the subject fairly. A formal inquiry, instituted before entering into the resolutions of 1823, would assuredly have been attended with many advantages. I am very far from saying that these resolutions were wrong, or that they would have been greatly modified had such a previous step been taken; but I cannot help thinking that before it can be safe to adopt any important change affecting the state of society, the different and frequently very complicated bearings of the measure, ought to be fully investigated. Without such a precaution any system of legislation is liable to partake more of theory than of practical knowledge, and may thus fail in some of its most essential provisions. It is easy, for instance, to say that slavery is a disgrace to civilized society and a Christian community, and ought therefore to be abolished; and this obvious and incontrovertible proposition might at once have been adopted by the legislature, as a fundamental axiom; but you need not be told how many momentous questions required to be decided, with

---

* Since writing the above, a compromise has taken place between Government and the West India body, by which the latter have desisted from asking a Committee, on a pledge being given that Government will take upon itself the necessary inquiries, and will communicate with the leading members of that body, with a view to a final and conciliatory adjustment of the question.

regard even to the welfare of the slaves themselves, before the legislature could intelligently and advantageously advance a single step farther; nor will you dissent from the statement, when I add, that still more difficult questions arise out of the just claims of the slave-owners. Now, the information necessary for settling these questions could only be obtained by inquiry. Why, then, it may justly be asked, has such an inquiry been denied to the repeated and earnest petitions of the Colonial legislature?

But it is not even now too late for investigation. No great progress has yet been made in legislation for the Colonies with reference to the slaves, though many things have been talked of; and I mean nothing disrespectful to any one, when I say, that the course which the debates in Parliament on this subject have taken, would have afforded sufficient evidence, had any been required, of the great disadvantage arising from the want of specific information. A theoretical wildness has been manifested in the speculations of some, a vagueness of remark, and an unstatesman-like ignorance in the observations of others, and a want of precision and intelligence in the schemes even of our most gifted legislators, which would not have occurred, had facts and data been afforded them by the labours of a parliamentary committee. And the neglect of this is doubtless one great reason why so little has hitherto been done in the settlement of the colonial question. When government set themselves to the serious consideration of the subject, which I apprehend they will feel themselves constrained to do without delay, they will find that the whole field must be travelled over

again from the beginning; and in order to do so safely, justly, and judiciously, they must previously set on foot an efficient inquiry.

This step must appear the more necessary when the state of the colonial office is considered. With almost every change of ministry that department, as you well know, changes its head, which occasions necessary embarrassment, and renders documentary information of paramount necessity. Without this, no degree of talent can fit a colonial secretary for the free and intelligent discharge of his duty, and no assiduity can prevent remissness and mismanagement in his inferior agents. Can it be believed that although the slave trade was abolished in this country in 1807, such was the carelessness which prevailed on the subject in the colonial office, that up to 1823, when the resolutions were passed to meet Mr. Buxton's motion with regard to manumission—a period of sixteen years—the instructions to the different governors of the islands in which they were required to *protect that traffic*, unnatural and revolting as it was then acknowledged to be, were not reversed? If you are not already aware of this striking fact, you will easily convince yourself of its undoubted truth, by reference to the documents in your own office. The colonists have been accused, I do not say unjustly, of disrespect to the suggestions of the Colonial Department; but with such facts as this staring us in the face, can we be surprised that they should not receive with implicit confidence the vague and ill-informed opinions of those who presided over this important branch of the administration.

But waiving this consideration, it is at least certain

that inquiry leads to exposure of abuses, both among the governors and governed, which is itself a great corrective; and that it records existing facts and circumstances, on which alone legislation can intelligently proceed; while, on other points, it gives room for such explanations as prevent misrepresentation or mistake.

I have already alluded to the steps which government have adopted, and which it is their duty still to adopt, for the more judicious and efficient instruction of the negroes in religious knowledge, but this is a subject of such vital importance, that it ought not to be slightly passed over. It is in fact "the one thing needful," for ameliorating the condition of the slaves, and rendering them fit for manumission. The appointment of a Colonial Bishop was a very wise measure, the fruits of which have already appeared in the salutary change that is rapidly taking place in the conduct and exertions of the Episcopal Clergy; but I trust it is not from any undue partiality to my own countrymen, or to the church of which I am a member, that I venture earnestly to recommend your very serious attention, Sir, and that of government, to the public establishment and support of the Presbyterian form of worship in the Colonies. If I know any thing of my own motives, such a suggestion arises solely from a strong conviction that nothing more important can be done for behoof of the negro population.

In point of constitutional principle, the justice of such a measure must appear incontrovertible. The Presbyterian Church of Scotland is a national establishment, as well as the Episcopal Church of England, and assuredly our colonies are neither English

nor Scotch, but British. Why the English Church, therefore, should be the only ecclesiastical establishment in these dependencies, does not appear. As to the expediency of this exclusive system, I could easily understand it, were the settlers in our colonies almost wholly Episcopalian. But the fact is remarkably the reverse. In Jamaica, at least, by far the greater part of the planters and their white agents, as Barclay incidentally states, have emigrated either from Scotland itself, or from the north of Ireland, where the inhabitants are chiefly descended from Scottish ancestors, and where the Presbyterian religion equally prevails. This is, I believe, also the case in Tobago, and in all the larger islands. Why should these, residing as they do in British colonies, be deprived of the privilege of enjoying a branch of their own established church?—a privilege which has already been conceded to the Scottish inhabitants of the East Indies.

But it is not in favour of the white population that I now speak. I advert to the religious instruction of the negroes. Without any invidious comparison with the sister establishment, it will be universally allowed that the Church of Scotland is essentially active and efficient, and that her whole system is peculiarly framed for the instruction of the great mass of the people—a duty, which in Scotland, and even in the north of Ireland, she has most creditably performed. It is indeed a remarkable characteristic of Presbyterianism that wherever it is established—in Holland for instance, and in some of the Swiss cantons,—the labouring classes are peculiarly intelligent, moral, and industrious. But I believe the system is no where so fully developed as

in Scotland, where the admirable scheme of parochial schools—a branch of the religious establishment,—is in full operation. Let government, then, give this Church to the West Indies, as a co-ordinate establishment with the Episcopal, and they will bestow on the negroes a boon, the extent of which can only be appreciated by those who are intimately acquainted with all the bearings of the system.

There can be no difficulty in carrying such a plan into immediate effect, so far as *materials* are concerned. The regularly educated preachers in Scotland, belonging to the establishment, who have attended college not less than eight years, and have passed their trials, are at least six times more numerous than in the ordinary course of nature, sufficient vacancies can be expected to occur to afford them livings; and perhaps the supply of well educated young men for our parochial schools is scarcely less disproportioned to the demand. From these two classes ample and excellent materials might at once be found, to answer any call which might be made for the education and religious instruction of the slave population, by the white inhabitants attached to the Presbyterian faith.

Into the means by which Government may promote the final manumission of the slave population of the West Indies, I shall not at present more particularly enter. That there are still several highly impolitic and unjustifiable laws in the slave code, I am well aware, and that it is the duty of the legislature to keep these steadily in its view, and to use every means of persuasion, and, if necessary, of authoritative remonstrance till they are finally abolished, there can be no

doubt. But the important principle laid down by Mr Canning, ought never for a moment to be lost sight of, that "if the condition of the slave is to be improved, that improvement must be introduced through the medium of his master."

LETTER VIII.

DUTY OF THE PUBLIC AT HOME, AND OF WEST INDIA PROPRIETORS.

SIR,

HAVING said so much, in my last, relative to the measures incumbent on government, I may be expected to say something also with regard to the sentiments and conduct of the British public, towards their Trans-Atlantic brethren.—I must be permitted, then, to state unequivocally what has strongly forced itself on my mind in the course of this investigation, that the West India proprietors have been treated by their countrymen with harshness and injustice. Sufficient attention has not been paid to the real state of the question, as to the parties on which the criminality rests, of originating, encouraging, and perpetuating the slave trade, by which dominion over the negro population was first acquired, and of establishing and completing that system of slavery, under sanction of which the slave-masters now hold their property in human beings. This is a subject respecting which it may be proper to enter into

some details when I come to speak of compensation in case of forced manumission; at present I merely throw out a general observation, with the view of putting the public on their guard against the unjust partiality of those hasty and sweeping censures in which the white population of our West India islands is exclusively and unsparingly involved, without once adverting to the part which the nation itself has had, in the very system so strongly reprobated. If it be true, as undoubtedly it is, that West India slavery is an evil of great and portentous magnitude—that it is founded in iniquity, and maintained by oppression—let not the whole weight of the opprobrium which attaches to it be laid on the shoulders of the colonial proprietors. In common candour and honesty let the blame be shared by the whole community—by the government which for centuries sanctioned the traffic in human beings, which enacted laws for its protection, which shared in its profits,—by the whole body of the people, who, till modern times, complacently looked on, without one remonstrance, nay, with concurrence and unequivocal approbation.

Were the real state of the case to be thus steadily kept in sight, there would be less violence in the language of benevolent men towards the white population of our colonies, and more moderation and justice in their proposed measures of emancipation. They would still, indeed, seek the welfare of the negro race, and they would seek it the more earnestly that they felt themselves, as British subjects, involved in the crime and disgrace incurred by Britain in her conduct to that much injured people; but, instead of giving

vent to their indignation exclusively against those who are in possession of West India property, they would view even the very prepossessions of their brethren, thus ensnared by public measures, with a degree of indulgence arising from a consciousness of reciprocal guilt; and, instead of urging government to acts of violent aggression upon that very property, to the constituting of which they were themselves parties, they would take a fair and comprehensive survey of the whole subject with reference to its final settlement, on principles which common equity demands.

But besides this act of justice towards the whites, there are important duties incumbent on the individuals of which the community is composed, in reference to the black population of our colonies. If it be injurious to urge their immediate manumission, it is assuredly on that very account a peculiarly incumbent duty on every person, according to his ability, to promote the temporal and spiritual welfare of those fellow-creatures, who, under such circumstances, have become connected with us as fellow-subjects, and of whose injuries we are personally bound by such powerful obligations to obtain redress.

An obvious part of the duty which thus lies upon us all, is constantly to proclaim, in the ears of our Trans-Atlantic countrymen, the responsibility of their situation, both as men and Christians, in becoming proprietors of human beings—like themselves accountable to God, and possessing immortal souls to be saved. In every publication, in every letter, in every opportunity of familiar intercourse, these truths ought to be urged home on their minds. It is by constant reiteration of this kind that society comes, slowly, perhaps, but surely, to acquiesce in truths which self-interest has perverted,

or prejudice has obscured; and by this means is promoted, what is justly called the progress of society in enlightened sentiment and liberal conduct. There can scarcely be said to be a single individual who does not in this respect contribute to form the character of the age in which he lives; and the more influential is the station which any man occupies, the more heavily does the responsibility rest upon him of the good or evil by which that character is distinguished. In reference to the case under consideration, there can be no doubt that no small part of the improvement which has already taken place, and which is so rapidly increasing, in the feelings and conduct of West Indian proprietors towards their slaves, has arisen from the opinions and views entertained in the mother country. Through a thousand channels these opinions and views have been conveyed across the Atlantic, or have breathed their influence on individuals before they left their native home, or when they revisited it; and with whatever indignation the charges which have been brought against these proprietors have been repelled, they have not failed to produce a most salutary effect. A regard for character, to which no man is insensible—a desire to belie the accusations of opponents—a sense of personal interest—have all combined with the suggestions of the silent monitor within, to modify the views of masters and overseers, and thus to soften the rigour of slavery, and promote the moral and religious welfare of the negroes. It is in this way, more than by direct interference, that those noble-minded men who have so perseveringly advocated the cause of the oppressed African race, have made their voice to be effectually heard.

I speak not of the vulgar herd, who have taken up the hue and cry against the West Indians from paltry party

motives, or selfish views of popularity, and who would pursue them to extermination; but of such men as the excellent Clarkson, who, by the mere force of moral suasion, have consigned to deserved infamy the execrable traffic in human flesh. We stand in need of such men, and were they to fail from the land, the cause of humanity would languish and retrograde. Let them still persevere, and let them be honoured by the wise and the good; yet let them beware, lest in viewing one single object with too intense an eye, they lose sight of others, of at least equal importance.

But it is not in this indirect way alone, that the inhabitants of the mother country may benefit their negro brethren in the Western Archipelago. Much may also be done by means of education and missionary societies. Some denominations of Christians have for a number of years turned their efforts in this direction, and, with a laudable alacrity, have contended against difficulties and discouragements, which would have extinguished the ardour of many, and caused them to abandon the attempt in despair. I do not say that all the missionaries employed in this good work were well fitted for their arduous and delicate undertaking; or that they never betrayed their trust through ignorance, through imprudence, or even through selfish and unworthy conduct. But it is not to be concealed, that the most unjustifiable prejudices and jealousies were long entertained with regard to them by many of the white inhabitants—that they were not unfrequently vilified in their characters, and impeded in their usefulness, and that the slightest deviation from propriety was eagerly laid hold of to their prejudice, and magnified beyond all bounds. This unhappy state of things, however, is rapidly passing away, and, year after year, as men's

views become more enlightened, greater facilities are afforded for the propagation of the gospel among the blacks. The missionaries who have lately occupied this field, speak of it in the most cheering terms; and their chief complaint is a want of labourers in so plentiful a harvest. It is true that there are still some plantations from which they are altogether excluded; and others on which, while partially tolerated, they are watched with a suspicious and hostile eye; but still their scope is ample, and their success abundant. The negroes receive them with open hearts, and listen eagerly to the astonishing views opened to them by the gospel, as it is read or explained by their instructors, while the tears, flowing down their sable cheeks, testify their convictions.*

Here, then, is a call of duty to which all who are interested in the real welfare of our Western dependencies ought seriously to attend. Let the funds of those societies, which direct their views to the instruction of the black population in that quarter, be more amply supplied, and let the zealous personal co-operation of all give new force and efficacy to so useful and pious an object. Prudence is doubtless required both in the selection of agents and in the instructions delivered for their guidance—but, in these respects, there is no reason to think that the societies already in existence are at all deficient; and the characters of most of the missionaries, and other persons employed, seem fully to entitle them to public support.

I must not, however, while urging this subject, neglect to reiterate the maxim of Mr. Canning, that, *if the condition of the slave is to be improved, that im-*

* Note B.

provement must be introduced through the medium of his master. Here, as in other things, it will not do to carry matters with too high a hand. The owners must be conciliated, and regard must be paid to their very prejudices, so far as that is possible, consistently with duty. It must be remembered, that the white inhabitants of these islands are but emerging from a state of delusion with regard to the obligations which lie upon them as Christian masters,—that they are still morbidly alive to the dangers of their situation, as the holders of so many fellow men in unwilling subjection, —that interests of which they are tenacious have been invaded or threatened,—that their property has been deteriorated, and their passions have been inflamed,— and that all these circumstances conspire to impress them with aversion and distrust, as to every kind of interference with their slaves by the inhabitants of the mother country. A due regard to such considerations will induce tenderness and forbearance towards the slave-owners, a line of conduct especially enforced by the necessity of deprecating their hostility, if not of acquiring their co-operation, before the slaves can be advantageously reached with the blessing of instruction.

Let not the West India proprietor, however, forget that the very principle which speaks, both to the legislature and the community of the mother country, the language of conciliation, proclaims to him a responsibility of no ordinary description. He has a duty to perform, various, difficult, perhaps dangerous, but certainly indispensable. The question no longer remains whether or not he shall govern a rude, hood-winked population, by the rough hand of coercion. That period is gone for ever, and his only choice now lies between two measures of opposite tendency, of which the one, by retard-

ing the race of improvement already begun, may preserve, as long as possible, his diminished and daily diminishing authority, and the other, by judiciously and sedulously infusing knowledge along with the principles of religion, may eventually and even speedily convert his slaves into a free, well principled, and industrious peasantry.

On which side the path of duty is to be found, no person needs to be informed; but, to some minds, it may not perhaps so obviously appear, that on the same side is also to be found the path of safety, and of personal interest. "Shall I with my eyes open," it may be said, "give countenance and support to a system of instruction, the tendency of which is, confessedly, to deprive me of all direct power over the slaves whom I have purchased with my own money, or reared on my estate at my own expense?" Such, indeed, I would answer, is the tendency of the system. But why should you do this? Partly because you will find it more profitable, as I have formerly explained, that your labourers, when properly educated, should support themselves, out of the wages obtained from you, as the fruit of their own industry, than that *you* should maintain them, and compel them to work without direct remuneration; but, more especially, because to persist in the present system, amidst the increasing lights which, in spite of every effort to prevent it, are, from all quarters, pouring in upon the negro race, is to incur the most imminent risk, arising from the certain approach of a fatal crisis, in which the slaves, should they continue to be coerced, may be expected to measure strength with their masters. In this view the matter is reduced to a question of profit and loss, which the most sordid can understand; and, hence it appears, that when you are employed in imbuing the minds of

your slaves with useful instruction, with a view to their manumission, you are engaged in a work, similar in principle to that of a judicious proprietor, who cultivates his barren wastes, that he may render them more productive; or, what is still more in point, you act like a wise ruler, who watches the course of events, and accommodates his measures to the progress of society, and the changing circumstances of the times.

Were we to contrast the two alternatives we have mentioned, the advantages of the one system, and the disadvantges of the other, would appear in a striking light. The planter who manages his slaves on the old plan of withholding from them the lights of education, and the blessings of religion, must necessarily be involved in a long train of suspicions and of jealousies;—he must watch with anxious care lest an intercourse with their fellows on neighbouring plantations should give them a longing desire for the fruit of the forbidden tree of knowledge;—he must endeavour by every means in his power to brutalize and stupify their minds, that he may keep them under subjection;—he must encourage their African superstitions, lest the civilizing influences of Christianity may reach their opening understandings; he must, in short, harbour towards them, in his heart, all the dark views and unamiable feelings of a gloomy, cautious, and evil-boding tyrant. He will not dare to appeal to any of the better dispositions of their nature, lest he give them a relish for improvement. To excite them by the hope of reward, or to attach them to his interests by acts of kindness, must in his estimation be to demoralize them. To be true to his system he must hold them relentlessly under the yoke, with the iron hand of a despot.

I believe, indeed, that there are not many planters,

of the present day, who could bring themselves to act with such savage consistency, whatever may be the case as to overseers and subordinate agents; and, if there were, such, I persuade myself, is the better spirit which now prevails, that, even in the colonies, they would be hooted out of respectable society. But there can be no doubt that to deviate from this policy is, so far, to desert the cause of the anti-manumissionists.

Compare with this the system of those who have adopted the views for which I have been contending. They regard their negro dependants as part of a large family, of which they are the head, and for the temporal and spiritual welfare of which they are accountable; or, if they do not take such just and enlarged views, they, at all events, perceive it to be their soundest policy to enlighten and instruct their slaves, not only that they may prevent the dreadful crisis which, as I have already remarked, could not fail to be produced by collision with a half-instructed and unprincipled population, whom they had bound to themselves by no ties of gratitude; but also that they may hasten the happy time in which they shall be able to command the hired labour of industrious and well-conditioned freemen, instead of the reluctant services of slaves, proverbially spiritless during their prescribed period of work, and dishonest and profligate in their hours of leisure. They are therefore careful to provide for the comfort of their negroes; to cultivate their kindly affections, to give them a relish for domestic ties and charities, to open their minds with useful instruction, and, above all, to introduce them to the knowledge, and incite them to the practice of that one true faith, which, while it is the comfort of life and the hope of death, is also the only sure foundation of those virtues and graces, that

constitute at once the ornament and stability of the social fabric. Keeping steadily in view the discipline necessary for their future character as a free and industrious peasantry, they assiduously endeavour to instil into their minds a noble ambition to acquire independence as the fruit of their own honest exertions, and to obtain the esteem and confidence of their superiors by their good conduct. With this benevolent intention, they take every practicable opportunity of prescribing job labour to their slaves, and of remunerating them according to the extra quantity of their work, or its superior excellence. They delight, in short, to see their black dependants not only contented and happy, but rising in the scale of human nature, and becoming an intellectual, a moral, and a religious community; and, by every means in their power—by the judicious distribution of rewards and punishments, by careful superintendence, by affectionate attentions, as well as by laying the foundation of their characters deep in Christian principle—they earnestly, patiently, and perseveringly endeavour to effect this most desirable object.

The negroes, on the other hand, are not slow to appreciate and to profit by these kindly dispositions on the part of their masters. It is not easy for us who have not witnessed the state of colonial slavery, to estimate the influence which the friendly offices of the whites are calculated to produce on the negro population, who are accustomed to look up to them as beings of a superior order. Their gratitude and disinterested attachment to those masters who treat them with kindness is universally acknowledged; their desire to become acquainted with the white man's God, and the eagerness with which they receive the doctrines of the gospel, is also well known. Nor will it be denied that these doc-

trines not only lay a powerful hold on their minds, but, wherever they are truly taught and practically enforced, produce a real and most salutary change in the conduct of those who receive them—a change, indeed, so entirely Christian as to put to utter shame the formal and inoperative religion which too extensively prevails at home. They cast away their African superstitions with contempt—they read and understand their Bibles—they learn to be sober, chaste, and honest:—they settle down in families, and, with their wives and children around them, acquire a relish for the sweets of domestic life—they become industrious, that they may fulfil their duty to those who are dear to them by contributing to their comfort and respectability. By such exercises and employments, they improve their moral and intellectual powers, and, under the operation of divine grace, which is not confined to any complexion, they gradually attain a permanent character of worth and intelligence which is to fit them for acting their part in civilized society, as well as to prepare them for a better world.

That this is no over-drawn picture, could easily be proved by reference to facts. I have already shewn that there are at this moment some estates in our colonies, where the system to which I have alluded, has been acted upon, and has either produced, or is in the act of producing, to their full extent, all these beneficial effects on the minds of many negroes. It were too much, indeed, to expect that, among so debased a race, there should not be some, whose dispositions are too perverted, and whose habits are too inveterate, to be materially affected by culture. Of this kind is a great part of the imported Africans; but the number of these is quickly diminishing, and, as they die, their places are filled up by their progeny, who, being born and

educated under the more genial influence of European impressions, are in a greater or less degree moulded by these; and are therefore better prepared and better disposed to profit by instruction.

As I would gladly persuade myself that the colonial legislatures, in their increasing regard for a liberal and enlightened policy, will supersede the necessity of compulsory enfranchisement by the mother country, it seems needless to enter at present on the question of compensation, which has so violently agitated the contending parties; though it would be easy to shew that the British public are too far implicated with the colonists, to suffer it for a moment to be supposed that such a right could be justly denied. It is more to our present purpose to repeat the remark, that whatever claim in equity the slave owners might have against the nation, should the legislature determine to manumit the slaves, every individual of the enthralled African race has a claim for reparation against his master, which no law can annul, and to which justice and religion are equally bound to listen.*

Let the West India proprietor look at the subject in this light. Let him remember that the only rational argument, as respects the slaves themselves, for delaying to strike off their chains, is their incapacity for freedom, and that the equitable duration of their bondage can therefore be measured by no other rule than the duration of that incapacity; and let him remember, also, that he will not escape from culpability by keeping these human beings in ignorance and barbarism, that their incapacity for freedom may be prolonged. I know not, in the whole catalogue of crimes,

* Note C.

a crime more black and heinous, than that of obstructing for interested purposes the mental improvement of our fellow-creatures; nor can a duty more imperative be named, than that of casting light into the minds of those committed with such fearful exclusiveness to our charge, of expanding their moral and intellectual powers, and of directing them to the great and paramount end of their existence. If from evil training or culpable neglect, therefore, slaves should still continue in a state which would render freedom a curse instead of a blessing to them, their owner must be told that he has no right to profit by his own injurious conduct;—that he is accountable both to God and man for that injury, and that it is vain for him to lay the flattering unction to his soul, of having freed himself from the responsibility of one act of iniquity by the commission of another.

I am sure that you, Sir, and every good man whose mind is not warped by the prejudice of self-interest, will join with me in thinking, that, altogether independent of the wishes or the authority of the mother country, a duty rests on the West India Proprietors themselves, the obligation of which no sophistry can gainsay, of carrying on, in good earnest, a system of moral and religious education among their enslaved dependants, which shall have for its *bona fide* object, frankly avowed and steadily adhered to, the ultimate manumission of the negro race. I know that I carry along with me the good sense and good feeling of the enlightened part of the West India community, when I say, that nothing less than this can possibly avail to vindicate their characters in the sight of their countrymen and the world;—nothing less can entitle them to the praise of upright, humane, and disinterested men;

—nothing less, above all, can prove them to be actuated by the fear of God, and by the principle of Christian duty.

Into any further details respecting the line of conduct which this view of the subject demands, I shall not at present stop to enter. Where the principle has already been fairly imbibed, there appears to be no want of acuteness and of prudence in reducing it to practice;* and we may confidently anticipate, as the first fruits of its more general reception, the erection of more numerous seminaries of education, adapted to the wants of the slaves of every age—from infant schools to those for the instruction of adults—as well as the more hearty encouragement, in every plantation throughout the length and breadth of the islands, not merely of the stated clergy, meritorious and indefatigable as they may be, but of catechists and missionaries also, and of all, in short, who will engage with zeal and prudence in so necessary a duty;—for the case is urgent, and the labour great, and the work has to be commenced nearly at the foundation.

---

* Why should not those planters who really feel the responsibility of their situation, immediately adopt the plan which has already been shewn to be so conducive to their personal profit, of substituting, among the better behaved negroes, reasonable wages for their labour, in place of their usual allowances of food and clothing? Were this plan judiciously adopted, at first on a small scale, as a reward for good conduct, and afterwards more extensively when its advantages come to be better understood and appreciated, I confidently anticipate its complete success; and the tendency of such a measure to prepare the slaves for emancipation is too obvious to require any comment. I do most earnestly urge this experiment on every enlightened, and especially on every religious slave owner.

LETTER IX.

FREE PEOPLE OF COLOUR—THEIR CONDITION, AND THE MEANS OF ITS IMPROVEMENT.

SIR,

I HAVE hitherto used the freedom to direct your attention, exclusively, to the situation of that portion of our colonial population, who are in a state of slavery; but there is another class of inhabitants in our western dependencies, whose peculiar condition cannot be overlooked by any person of common humanity, and whose increasing numbers and influence, force them on the serious consideration of the colonial politician.—I need scarcely say, that I allude to the Free People of Colour.

This unhappy race, originating, chiefly, in the illicit intercourse of Europeans with their slaves, have, hitherto, been neglected, undervalued, and I fear I must add, too often oppressed. Constituting an intermediate grade between the whites and the blacks, they yet cannot be considered as a link in the chain of society connecting the one with the other. They are, in fact, a distinct community, with whom the other two communities can scarcely be said to have any sympathy. Proud of the European blood which flows in their veins, they heartily despise their maternal relatives, the African race, both free and enslaved; and, in their

turn, they are scarcely less heartily despised by the higher class, from whom they derive their paternal descent, and whose countenance they would be otherwise ambitious to claim. Contempt naturally begets hatred, in those who are the objects of it; and hence, the distressing spectacle is exhibited of various societies existing together in the same islands, who, instead of any common bond of union, are taught, from their tenderest years, to cherish towards each other no other sentiments than those of antipathy and distrust, inflamed by mutual acts of unkindness.

But though, even to the present day, this is true as a general remark, it affords me sincere pleasure to say, that here also, as well as among the masters and slaves, the spirit of amelioration is abroad. This will strikingly appear on the slightest glance backwards to the history of the brown population, in every island of the Western Archipelago. In adverting to this subject, however, and indeed in the whole of this chapter, I shall, for the sake of brevity and distinctness, confine my observations to the state of that class in Jamaica, as the occurrences in this most influential colony may be fairly extended, in their general character, to represent the transactions regarding the same body in the sister dependencies.*

The original state of this hapless race seems to have been regulated by no law. According to the caprice of their fathers, they either shared the degradation of their maternal inheritance, or, if freed from the yoke of coerced labour, for the most part grew up neglected by both parents. Till the year 1748, when an act passed permitting them to bear evidence against *each other*, this proscribed caste had no *nomen juris*, and were as

* Note D.

incapable of protecting themselves in courts of law, against encroachments and injuries, even from their fellows, as if they had been beasts of burden.

A better feeling, however, began at last to take place of this narrow and ungenerous policy. In 1796, an act was passed, for the first time allowing free people of colour to bear evidence against the whites in courts of justice, limited however to cases of assault. This first and stinted boon was followed up, in 1813, by more ample concessions. All persons of free condition were then admitted to give evidence on the same footing as their European fellow-subjects; and a most oppressive act passed in 1762, which injuriously limited the power of making devises of property in favour of free negroes and persons of colour, together with some other impolitic laws which operated against them, was at the same time repealed.

Nor was this all. The colonial legislature, that same year, opened a door to the granting of much more ample immunities to such persons of colour as should be thought worthy of enjoying them, by giving them the power of taking out what were called privilege papers. The object of this enactment was the gradual introduction of the better educated and more respectable mulattoes to the full rights of citizenship; but the concession lost much of its grace by being, till lately, clogged with heavy fees, and was not generally acceptable to those in whose favour it was made, who were averse to the principle of the act, which proposed to confer as a favour, or rather to expose to sale, what they felt they were entitled to claim as a right.

During the present year (1830) a still more important privilege has been conferred by the legislature of Jamaica on this hitherto misgoverned race, I mean the right of the elective franchise. This, if allowed by the

crown, will at once place them on an entirely new footing, as, by bestowing on them a political character, it will open the way to a more equitable and liberal policy; and, although the grant is not unaccompanied with restrictions which mark the lingering jealousy of the whites, it may be joyfully hailed as the harbinger of a better day.*

---

* THE chief provisions of the Brown Act, as it is called, are in these words:—

1st. "That all persons of free condition, being the natural born subjects of his Majesty, shall after the passing of this act, be permitted to vote at any election, for any person to serve in the Assemblies of this Island, provided he possess an estate of freehold in a house, in any of the towns of this Island, such house being of the actual annual value of one hundred pounds, and so assessed or rated in the parish books, for at least twelve calendar months immediately antecedent to such election, and who is in the actual possession of such premises by himself, agent, or tenant, on the day of election; or else, shall possess an estate of freehold in land and premises out of such towns, but in such parish, where such election shall be held, of the actual annual value of fifty pounds; and provided, that the person claiming to vote thereon shall have been assessed in, and actually have paid, within twelve calendar months next, before the day of such election, the sum of ten pounds, for all taxes and assessments, imposed, on any account whatsoever; or else be possessed of a rent charge, or annual sum of the real and true value of fifty pounds per annum, (arising, issuing, and payable out of messuages, lands, and tenements in such parish, city, or town,) on which such messuages, lands, and tenements, there have been and are negroes, or stock liable to be taxed for twelve calendar months before the day of election," &c. &c.

2d. "That no free person, who is above three degrees removed in a lineal descent from the negro ancestor exclusive,

The disabilities, however, under which the brown population still continue to labour, are neither few nor insignificant. They are excluded from being members of Assembly: they cannot sit as jurors even when the cause relates to individuals of their own class. Though bound to give military service, and forming half the militia force of the colony, they are not suffered to rise to the rank of officers, even in their own regiments. They are not eligible to serve in any parochial office, nor to perform public functions of any description. They are debarred from all places of trust and emolument on the estates of the planters.* As instances of more petty, but

---

except such as are, under any laws of this island, entitled to vote at elections, shall be allowed to vote or poll in elections; and no one shall be deemed a Mulatto, after the third generation as aforesaid, but that they shall have all the privileges and immunities of his Majesty's white subjects of this island."

The great body of free persons of colour, are alleged to be by no means pleased with this act. Their objections are, that it is intended:—1st. To throw dust in the eyes of the inhabitants of the mother country, by a shew of liberality which really bestows very trifling and restricted immunities; and secondly, to divide the more wealthy Mulattoes from their brethren, in order to diminish the strength and influence of the body, that the latter may be kept the longer from attaining the rights of citizenship. However unreasonable these jealous surmises may be, it certainly appears that the privileges bestowed do not descend sufficiently low in the scale of property. But more will doubtless be quickly conceded, and it is earnestly to be hoped that the concessions may be made with a good grace.

* The law which virtually excludes the coloured people from employment on the plantations, is called the Deficiency Act. The earliest enactment of this kind, was passed in 1715. It was not originally directed against the brown population, its

not unimportant acts of partiality and injustice, I may add that, when wounded in military service, they receive only one-third of the remuneration conferred on the whites; and, if as paupers they require relief, their colour deprives them of half the usual allowance. Into the schools, to the maintenance of which they contribute, they find, to say the least, great difficulty of admission for their children. Even at church, the superiority assumed by the whites is not laid aside.

A condition of such degradation cannot fail to operate strongly both on the temper and feelings of those who are the objects of it; but notwithstanding these privations and discouragements, rapid advances have of late years been made by the coloured population in wealth, in knowledge, and in respectability, as well as in numbers and in power. Still, however, their legal disabilities are such as I have described, and, making every allowance for the favourable change which has taken place, it must appear to every candid man, that their situation, aggravated, perhaps, in some respects by that very change, is altogether inconsistent with the rights of human beings, with their own personal happiness,

---

simple object being to oblige every proprietor to keep a certain number of white servants on his property, in proportion to the number of his slaves, with a view to mutual protection against any attempts at insurrection on the part of the blacks. The operation of this law, however, has been very injurious to the interest of the people of colour, as by precluding them from work in the country, it has forced them into the towns, which they have filled to overflowing; and where, while the more intelligent exercise the mechanical trades with creditable industry and ingenuity, numbers of them, being unable to find adequate employment, have sunk into indolence and become lost in dissipation.

and with the welfare of the country of which they are denizens.

But before proceeding to the considerations suggested by this sentiment, let us first pause to take a dispassionate view of the present strength and resources of this crushed and despised race, considered in a political light.

In the year 1825, the white population of Jamaica was estimated to be as follows :—

Whites	25,000
Free People of Colour	30,000
Free Blacks	10,000
Slaves	340,000

The very statement of these numbers is sufficient to shew the importance of the coloured inhabitants; but it is necessary to add that every year is increasing the number of this body, while it is diminishing that of the whites. About forty years ago, the white population is believed to have amounted to thirty thousand, while that of the mixed breeds, as the brown people are called, was rated at no more than ten thousand. There are various reasons for expecting that the comparative increase must go on in an accelerating ratio. The climate of the West Indies, so unfriendly to the life of Europeans, is to their progeny by the African race known to be remarkably salubrious, a circumstance which of itself must operate strongly in favour of their rapid propagation. But besides this, frequent manumissions, as well as the irregular intercourse of males, both white and brown, with free black females, are constantly bringing numerous accessions to the coloured race, over and above the natural increase arising from their cohabitation with each other; while, on the other hand, as the European population is chiefly composed of males, the white progeny is always scanty in proportion to the number of white inhabitants.

These causes, constantly operating, cannot fail quickly to enhance the numerical superiority of the brown over the white inhabitants, already too great to be viewed without anxiety. It has become, therefore, even viewed in this light, a question of grave policy essentially connected with the future welfare of the colonies, in what manner so powerful a body can be permanently conciliated to the government, and so amalgamated with the whites as to form one society, having common interests and a common bond of union.

But it must be further remarked, that the coloured inhabitants, although borne down and disdained, are by no means so poor, helpless, and uninfluential as is generally supposed. In Jamaica alone they are in possession of wealth which, on a moderate computation, has been estimated at not less than three millions sterling. All the pimento plantations, with the exception of one only, are in their hands, and they are the owners of several coffee estates, besides having the property of numerous houses in the various towns of the island. Nor are they destitute of instruction. Many of them being the offspring of men of wealth, have been educated in the mother country with a liberality which places them, in point of accomplishments, on a footing little short of the best informed inhabitants of the colony. It cannot, in the present day, be alleged that their intellectual capacity is naturally more feeble than that of their European parents, for experience belies and has exploded the prejudice; and so far as a vigorous constitution, and bodily powers adapted to the climate, are advantageous, they are confessedly superior.*

---

* Note E.

That this is a just but inadequate representation of the power and resources of the brown population, no one, at all acquainted with the subject, will venture to deny :—and, leaving other considerations for the present out of the question, who can look the subject fairly in the face and say, that to keep such a body of men in a state of alienation is either desirable or safe? What could be more ominous than the excitement of a factious spirit, in such a country, among so large and intelligent a class, bound together by a common feeling of wrong and contumely, whose hearts are lacerated but not broken, and whose manly aspirations are mortified but not subdued?

Who does not see that matters cannot rest in their present state—that something must be done in behalf of this neglected race? Self-interest, personal preservation, imperious necessity, demand it. Need I add to all this the claims arising from the mutual ties of a common country, and a common kindred? Or, if these are scorned, shall I mention obligations still more sacred? Shall I adjure fellow Britons, fellow Christians, in the name of justice—of humanity—of religion? —of every thing honourable—of every thing generous—of all that is lovely and of good report?

But what better policy can be pursued? Shall the mother country interfere? God forbid! Let her be anticipated by the colonists. Let them proceed with accelerated energy in the wise plans of concession, which they have at last, though too tardily and too jealously, commenced.

It is not difficult to enumerate the grievances which ought to be removed. The only embarrassment is, in so appalling a list, to know where to begin. Why may not the brown population be at once admitted to sit as

jurors, in cases relating to their own class? Why may not the privilege be immediately conceded to them of holding commissions in militia regiments of their own colour, and in those of the free blacks? Why may not places of trust under government, and in the parochial police, be unhesitatingly opened to them? Why should not the invidious distinctions be instantly abolished, which relate to military and pauper allowances? Why should they not cease to be discouraged in the education of their children, and disgraced in their attendance on the public duties of religion?—or rather, in these laudable employments, why should they not be supported and honoured? Above all, why should a paltry dislike, or an ill-founded jealousy, narrow their means of subsistence, and force them to congregate in towns, where, if any where, the facility of combination renders them dangerous, and where, at all events, they have become a burden to themselves and a nuisance to the public, when, by affording them the means of honourable and profitable employment in the agriculture of the country, the planters might obtain faithful servants, a salutary stimulus might be given to the talents and industry of a numerous class who languish for want of employment, and society might be relieved from a pressure, which is already burdensome, and would soon become intolerable? If I am not greatly misinformed, large tracts of fertile land, in many of the islands, still lie waste and free to be disposed of by the colonial legislatures. A little judicious encouragement would induce many of the coloured people to settle on these, and gain for themselves a decent subsistence, if they might not even rise to affluence. Without doubt the better behaved,—and many of them have of late become deeply imbued with Christian principle,—might at least be advanta-

geously employed on the plantations, in filling up vacancies, as they occur, in those situations of trust and emolument, which, up to the present time, have been open only to the whites. The policy which has hitherto excluded them from such employment, whatever it may formerly have been, is, under existing circumstances, entirely unreasonable. Mutual antipathy will always tend to keep them aloof from dangerous combinations with the blacks; a more intimate intercourse with the white inhabitants will bind to their interests such of them as are thus engaged; they will become less formidable by separation; and, rising step by step through the various grades of agricultural life, under the direct influence of civilized society, they will gradually acquire such habits and views as may fit them for exercising, still more fully and freely, all the functions of good citizens.

In proposing these ameliorations I have studiously avoided every thing which can give reasonable cause of disgust even to the prejudices of the whites. I am not unaware that there are deeply-rooted prepossessions which stand in the way of such changes as would all at once break down, between the two communities, the barrier erected by unhappy circumstances;—and I am by no means sure that the brown population are themselves in a condition to render so sweeping an alteration in the state of society desirable for their own sake. But assuredly, whatever is granted should be bestowed freely and generously; not indeed so as to shock public feeling, lest a reaction be produced, but so as to go immediately before it, and to guide it with a firm, though gentle hand.

In this course the prejudices of the whites in holding back, are more to be dreaded than the impatience of

their coloured fellow subjects in pushing forward. A reluctant and over-cautious legislation is most earnestly to be deprecated. Every additional privilege, ungraciously conferred, will give to the emerging race, as they advance in improvement, an additional consciousness of their own power. Delay will be construed into unwillingness, and tardy concession will be regarded as an indication of weakness and fear. The whole grace of conciliation will be lost. A spirit of hostility will be fostered, and the rights successively acquired will be viewed rather as conquests wrung from the hands of enemies, than as grants freely and kindly bestowed by the justice and humanity of friends.

A liberal policy, on the other hand, will produce an effect the very reverse of all this. Every new concession, made in a spirit of amity, will be received by the coloured race as a munificent boon. The comforts which will thus be introduced into their homes, the respectability which will be added to their individual stations, the equity which will be infused into the administration of justice, as each successive act not only removes an ancient cause of irritation, but confers a new benefit, will attach them to their white brethren by increasing obligations. Gratitude will combine with self-interest in inducing them to make common cause with their enlightened legislators; and that race which is now the opprobrium and the weakness of the colonies, will stand forth at once a monument of their legislative wisdom, and a source of their political strength.*

---

* Note F.

LETTER X.

FOREIGN SLAVE TRADE—ITS EXTENT AND CONSEQUENCES.

SIR,

THERE is another subject of great public importance, relative to the Colonial question, which I must not wholly overlook—I allude to the extent to which the slave-trade is still carried on by other countries, and its disastrous effects on our colonial commerce. These appear to me to be neither sufficiently known, nor, when known, sufficiently estimated. It has happened with the question of the slave-trade as it happens with most other questions of great public excitement; as soon as the point was gained to which the public effort was directed—the abolition of the detestable traffic, so far as British subjects were engaged in it—a feeling of self-gratulation was universally cherished, which quickly subsided into an immoveable and most ominous and irrational apathy. In the instance before us, this apathy has been rendered still more inveterate, on account of the national sympathies, on the subject of

slavery, having of late been powerfully roused in another direction, by the efforts of those whose aim is to follow up the triumph of humanity, in effecting the complete and immediate emancipation of the negro race under our dominion. A benevolent zeal is apt to over-reach its mark by the too exclusive view which it takes of one object; and, in the present instance, this natural failing has, I think, been clearly verified. I do not say that those, who, with such creditable ardour and ability, took the lead in the abolition of the slave-trade, have withheld their efforts for putting down the evil in every other part of the civilized world; but I cannot help thinking that their vigilance and perseverance have considerably relaxed; and I must distinctly state, that, in the new direction to which their philanthropy has been turned, they have in a great degree lost sight of the unhappy effect that their attacks on the West India system are necessarily calculated to produce, in perpetuating among other nations the traffic in human flesh, which Britain has so honourably abandoned.

That my readers may form some idea of the extent to which the slave-trade is still in operation, it will be necessary to enter into a few painful details, which I shall extract from public documents, of the accuracy of which there can be no dispute.

The slave-trade, as already stated, was abolished in this country in 1807, and the superiority of our naval force tended, during the continuance of the war, to restrain it within comparatively narrow bounds—indeed almost entirely to suppress it, as to those nations with which we carried on hostilities. But after the

restoration of peace, all the efforts made by Britain could not prevent its revival; and the evils resulting from this revival are thus distinctly stated in a paper presented to Parliament in 1819:—

"The effects of these proceedings have been highly detrimental. Exclusive of all the evils which are inseparable from a slave-trade under any circumstances, they have discouraged, and, in some cases, crushed the first efforts to extend agriculture and legitimate commerce, which had been produced in this quarter (Africa), by the cessation for a time of the slave-trade. Even the innocent commerce of Sierra Leone with the surrounding districts, which had tended more than anything else to give a steady impulse to the industry of the neighbouring natives, has been subjected to outrage and spoliation, attended in some cases with loss of life. They operate most fatally in another point of view: the native chiefs and traders, who began at length to be convinced, by the evidence of facts, that the abolition was likely to be permanently maintained, and that it was therefore absolutely necessary to engage heartily in schemes of cultivation, if they would preserve their influence, have learnt from recent events to distrust all such assurances. Notwithstanding all that had been said and done, they now see the slave-traders again sweeping the whole range of coast without molestation; nay, with the air of triumph and defiance. It would be difficult fully to appreciate the deep and lasting injury inflicted on Northern Africa by the transactions of the last two or three years. And this injury will be the greater on this account, that, in the interior of that country at least, they do not discriminate with any accuracy between the different nations of Europe. They only know, in general, that the white men, who had ceased to trade in slaves, and who, they understood, were to trade no more in that commodity, except as smugglers liable to be seized and punished, have now resumed *the open, avowed, and uncontrolled practice of that traffic.*"

Such was the state of the slave-trade in 1819; and up to the present hour, instead of being diminished, it has fearfully increased. On the 1st of January, 1828,

the mixed Commissioners at the Havannah, of the different powers who have engaged to suppress the traffic, addressed a letter to the Earl of Dudley, of which I regret that I must limit myself to the following extract :—

" The number of arrivals (*i. e.* slave vessels) in 1827, differs little from that in 1826; but the number of departures has considerably increased—from 15 to 27; and as the greater part have sailed within the last four months, and several are still fitting out, there is every appearance of the traffic again becoming as brisk and extensive as during the years 1824 and 1825. The mode of carrying it on is precisely as has been stated in former reports; and no effect whatever has been produced here, either by the royal order of his Catholic Majesty, issued in January, 1826, or the repeated remonstrances of his Majesty's government. The notoriety with which the trade is carried on, is, if possible, greater than ever," &c. &c.

Such is the present state of Cuba, into which, according to Baron Humboldt, the whole number of slaves imported from 1815 up to the close of 1828, was not less than a *hundred and sixty-three thousand !* And what is still more to be deplored, the official abolition of the slave-trade by Spain, instead of diminishing the activity of the traffic, seems actually to have increased it, while it has added to its horrors. The average annual importation into the Havannah, during the last ten years in which the trade was legal, was 11,000, while that of the five years in which it has been illegal has increased to 13,500.

In the Brazils a law has been passed, (which, however, will probably be evaded, like those which have been enacted by some other nations possessing territories in the west,) declaring that the slave-trade in

that country shall cease on 30th May of the present year (1830).* Meanwhile, it appears that the number of African slaves imported into the single port of Rio Janeiro, amounted in nine months previous to April, 1828, to 30,964; and the correspondence laid before Parliament for the year 1829 proves that the traffic is conducted with equal activity in the colonies belonging to France, as well as Spain; so that it has been moderately calculated that the foreign colonies have, by importation alone, since the peace of 1815, received an addition of *six hundred and fifty-three thousand* negroes to their slave population; an amount nearly equal to the whole community of slaves in the western dependencies of Britain!!

In considering this subject, it is impossible to forget the horrors of the middle passage, details of which, as they occurred in British vessels before the abolition, produced so strong a sensation on the public mind. These horrors are certainly not diminished, now that the trade has passed into foreign hands. This will readily be believed; but as the nature of the treatment received by the wretched negroes during their transportation from their native shores to the colonies may have partly faded from the memory of some of my readers, I must, at the risk of harrowing their feelings, be permitted to quote a single passage from one of the recent reports to the Admiralty on this subject. That which I shall select, not because it records greater

* Information has reached this country since the above was written, that the Brazil Emperor has taken steps to put an actual stop to the traffic.

atrocities than others, but because it happens to be somewhat more condensed, is from Commodore Bullen, dated 3d May, 1826:—

"A short time after detention, I visited her (a captured slave vessel), to be an eye-witness to the state of the slaves on their being brought on deck for the purpose of their being counted; and I have to assure your Lordships that the extent of human misery evinced by these unfortunate beings, it is almost impossible for me to describe. They were all confined in a most crowded state below, and many in irons, which latter were released as soon as they could be got at. The putrid atmosphere emitted from the slave-deck was horrible in the extreme, and so inhuman are these fellow-creature dealers, that several of those who were confined at the farther end of the slave-room, were obliged to be dragged on deck in almost a lifeless state, and wasted away to mere shadows, never having breathed the fresh air since their embarkation. Many females had infants at their breasts; and all were crowded together in a solid mass of filth and corruption, several suffering from dysentery; and although but a fortnight on board, 47 of them had died of that complaint."

This is but a faint account of the barbarities of the middle passage; but I shall only add, that to drown, without remorse, all the negroes who become blind during the voyage by the frequent disease of the ophthalmia, or are rendered otherwise unprofitable, is a familiar occurrence; that a petition presented to the Chambers of the French Legislature, states it to be a fact, "established by authentic documents, that the slave captains throw into the sea, every year, about 3,000 negroes, men, women, and children;" and that such is the intolerable misery occasioned by the inhuman treatment they receive, that many of the negroes, rendered desperate, destroy themselves by plunging into the waves, locked in each other's arms.

What, then, it may be asked, have we yet gained to humanity by the abolition of the slave-trade in this country? Much, I freely answer, as relates to Britain, but little as regards the injured African race. It is indeed most distressing to think to what an extreme degree the benefits expected to be bestowed on that long injured people, by the noble act of Great Britain in voluntarily depriving herself, for the sake of humanity, of an enriching traffic, have been counteracted and rendered nugatory.

The question which must naturally occur to any man of common humanity, in perusing this most painful statement, is, By what means can such tremendous evils be removed? Will the country, which has made such generous sacrifices in this great cause, sit tamely down, and see, unmoved, those sacrifices become abortive, while other nations fatten on the unlawful prey which she has abandoned? Will the government of a country which has so splendidly vindicated her character, suffer her to be thus thwarted in her views, and deprived of the rich reward due to her generosity? To such questions, those who are acquainted with our public transactions are able to give an answer, if not altogether satisfactory, at least of a nature sufficient to acquit our rulers of indifference. Ever since the abolition of the slave-trade, efforts have been made, not always wisely, perhaps, but sincerely and perseveringly, for inducing other nations to concur in so important a measure; and the progress which has been made,—so far, at least, as public acts indicate it,—has not been inconsiderable. In the treaty made with France in 1814, that country engaged to abolish the slave-trade

throughout her own dominions in the course of five years, and to concur with Great Britain in making every effort to induce all the powers of Christendom also to decree its abolition. The Congress of Vienna was induced, by the strenuous efforts of Lord Castlereagh, who felt that he had been previously negligent and faulty, to declare that "the slave trade was the desolation of Africa, the degradation of Europe, and the afflicting scourge of humanity." By separate treaties between this country and Spain and Portugal, the former agreed to abolish the trade entirely after May, 1820; and the latter became bound, in 1817, to cease from sanctioning it, on all the line of the African coast, north of the Equator. These concessions cost Britain nearly a million and a half of money. The indefatigable exertions of this country also procured similar treaties to be entered into, by the Netherlands in 1818, by Sweden in 1824, and by the Brazils in 1826. By these treaties the mutual right of search was established among the contracting powers, and mixed commissioners were appointed for carrying the conditions into effect.

These public acts, however, have hitherto been rendered altogether ineffectual, by the proud refusal of France and America to consent to the right of search, which has rendered both flags, but especially the French, too secure a protection for slave traders of all nations; and notwithstanding the traffic may now be said to be contrary to the laws of every civilized country, scarcely any progress has been made in its actual suppression; the only consequence as regards unhappy Africa, of the magnanimous conduct of Britain in re-

nouncing it, having been to throw it into more cruel hands, and to cause it to be carried on in a more cruel manner.

And this leads to an inquiry, which I would earnestly press upon all who are really desirous of the welfare of the negro race, with regard to the connection subsisting between the present flourishing and apparently irrepressible state of the African slave-trade, and the embarrassments of our western colonies. If it can be proved that the difficulties under which these dependencies labour are the chief cause of the commercial enterprise of other countries, which gives such encouragement to the foreign traffic in slaves, it must follow, that, to relieve them from these difficulties, if not the only means, must at least be a very powerful means of repressing and of finally extinguishing that traffic. To shew how far this is actually the case must be the work of another letter;—meanwhile I cannot close this without appealing to the good sense and feeling of those excellent men who have devoted themselves to the redress of African wrongs.

The one great object which the enemies of the traffic in slaves had in view, was to abolish, throughout the world, a system most disgraceful to human nature, and entailing calamities on mankind greater, in magnitude and extent, than those of any other scheme of wickedness that the perverted ingenuity of selfishness had ever invented. In this they must be aware that they have altogether failed. One important step indeed they have gained, in washing this foul stain from British hands, and thus placing the most influential country upon earth, in an attitude of hostility against the sys-

tem. But they ought not to forget that this is nothing but a step, which, if not followed up, may tend only to aggravate the evil. And, indeed, that it has actually aggravated the evil, is a truth not to be concealed. The abolitionists well know that in unhappy Africa, to which they fondly promised the reparation of all its injuries, the same horrid and savage cruelties as ever continue to prevail—wars excited by slave dealers, that the captives may be bought and sold—peaceful villages despoiled of their inhabitants by treacherous kidnappers—whole countries lying waste and desolate under the terrors of a system, which violates all the laws of God and man, and whose very tender mercies are cruel; and all these outrages on humanity, rendered still more outrageous by the necessity of secrecy and despatch, which the acknowledged unlawfulness of the traffic imposes, and by the additional ferocity which always characterizes wretches engaged in transactions condemned by the law of nations. To the horrors of the middle passage, what new horrors are added by the fear of discovery and capture!—For such as survive that inhuman ordeal, what increased atrocities are reserved, by the subterfuges to which both the seller and purchaser are driven in this illegal commerce, and by the unrestricted temptation to which it gives rise, of straining to the very utmost the physical strength of the miserable victims!

Where is benevolence—where slumbers religion, that such enormities should still be permitted to prevail among civilized nations! Surely—surely, the friends of miserable Africa, who once so nobly vindicated the rights of humanity, have not perished from the earth,

or lost that moral power with which they then arrayed themselves.

But it is to be feared that these men, of whom their country—of whom the world has such cause to be proud, are now wasting their strength on an inferior object of very doubtful policy, and thus, instead of advancing, are unconsciously counteracting their own admirable work. I think it demonstrable that to embarrass the transactions, and injure the prosperity of the British colonies, is to take the surest means of promoting the foreign slave trade; and, on the other hand, that to foster and protect these colonies, is at once to discourage that atrocious traffic, and to use the best means in our power for the rapid advancement of our colonial slaves in comfort and civilization; thus necessarily hastening the era of their final emancipation.

Will not our abolitionists then pause in the course they are pursuing, that they may consider whether their philanthropic object might not be better attained, by changing their plans, and again turning their energies towards that direction in which they were first impelled.

LETTER XI.

NECESSITY OF REDUCING TAXES ON WEST INDIA PRODUCE— CONCLUSION.

SIR,

THAT the temporizing policy of government, united with the hostility which the advocates for immediate manumission have openly evinced, has already paralized the commerce of our colonies, and materially injured West India property, there can be no doubt; nor is it less certain, that the foreign growers of the produce which forms the staple of these dependencies, have taken advantage of such unfavourable circumstances to extend its cultivation, and materially to cripple our trade. While from the great markets of Russia, Austria, France, and the Netherlands, the British planter is virtually excluded by the fiscal regulations of these countries, he is met, in the continental marts which remain open to him, by competitors from foreign countries, who are constantly, and at a comparatively small expense,* acquiring new slaves from Africa, with

* The cost of a slave, where the traffic in human beings still exists, is only £35—while the expense of rearing a slave in the British colonies is not less than double that amount.

regard to whom few humane regulations, like those now established in our dependencies, exist, to impede the rigorous use of arbitrary power in extracting labour. It is thus that these competitors find almost unlimited means advantageously to extend the culture of the sugar cane, and to undersell the British merchant. For, let it be remarked, that although free labour be incalculably more profitable than compulsory, yet the steps necessary to be taken, before the change can be safely accomplished from a state of slavery to that of freedom, are to the slave-owner the very reverse of profitable. The wretch who can sit down coolly to calculate, will probably find that, by working a slave to death, and then supplying his place with a newly imported African in the vigour of youth, whom he remorselessly destines to the same fate, he will obtain a greater pecuniary return than could be produced by a more humane system of thraldom. At all events, there can be no doubt, that, where the slave trade exists, the yoke is constantly laid most heavily on the neck of the slaves. The African warrior, whose proud spirit requires to be subdued and broken, finds no sympathetic feelings rising in the breast of his master and oppressor, to mitigate his doom. He is ill lodged, ill fed, ill clothed ; while, from day to day, without relaxation, he is driven by the bloody lash, to his cheerless, thankless, and degrading toil. The only question with regard to him which ever occurs to the mind of his owner, is a question of profit and loss ; and every expense bestowed on him is bestowed with a niggard's hand.*

* Dr Walsh, in his recent publication on "Slavery in the Brazils," gives a striking and most revolting account of the brutaliz-

The humane master, such as he now exists in our West India colonies, must utterly fail in his competition

---

ing effects of Slavery in that country, where the traffic was, when he wrote, in full operation. The following passage is sufficiently expressive :—

"On contemplating their persons (*i. e.* the persons of the slaves), you see them with a physical organization resembling beings of a grade below the rank of man; long projecting heels, the gastronomic muscle wanting, and no calves to their legs; their mouths and chins protruded, their noses flat, their forehead retiring, having exactly the head and legs of the baboon tribe. Some of the beings were yoked to drays, in which they dragged heavy burdens. Some *were chained by the necks and legs*, and moved with loads thus encumbered. Some followed each other in ranks, with heavy weights on their heads, chattering in the most inarticulate and dismal cadence as they moved along. Some were sucking young sugar canes, like beasts of burden eating green provender, and some were seen near the water, lying on the bare ground, among filth and offal, coiled up like dogs, and seeming to expect or require no more comfort or accommodation; exhibiting a state and conformation so inhuman, that they not only seemed, but actually were, far below the inferior animals around them."

This shocking picture is contrasted in other parts of the book by representations of the character of the *free* negroes, which agreeably relieve the mind after the perusal of so harrowing a description. Dr Walsh attended the funeral of the colonel of a militia regiment, composed principally of negroes. "Their band," says the Doctor, "produced sweet and agreeable music, of the leader's own composition, and the man went through some evolutions with regularity and dexterity." He tells us that he saw the negroe "under four aspects of society;" viz., as a slave, "lower than the other animals of burden that surrounded him;"—as a soldier, "neat and clean in his person, and shewing the port and bearing of a white man similarly placed;"—as a citizen, "remarkable for the respectability of his appearance, and the decorum of his manners;"—and as a priest, "fulfilling with seriousness and intelligence those high functions comprising the duties of a minister of the Christian faith." What an instructive lesson is this to the Anti-abolitionists!

with such an opponent. The decent clothing, the comfortable home, the family conveniences which he provides for his slaves, the restricted labour which he exacts, the kindly feeling with which his authority is exerted—all these combine to render his expense of management comparatively so great, and the work produced comparatively so little, that there can be no wonder, if all his superior skill should be of no avail in counteracting these disadvantages, and in enabling him to carry his produce to market on an equal footing with his foreign rivals. The result, therefore, is, that he has been brought to the verge of ruin.

But, independent of these circumstances, a great change has been necessarily produced where the slave trade is abolished, in the relative proportion of effective to non-effective slaves, a large addition having been made to the latter, which must considerably enhance the expense. This difference has been produced in various ways. By the more humane and paternal system to which the abolition has given rise, it has been brought about, that more children are born and survive, and that greater numbers outlive the rigours of servitude and reach the infirmities of old age, while there are no fresh importations of human beings in the vigour of life to disturb the natural proportion. It will not appear surprising, therefore, that, in our colonies at this moment, no fewer than sixty-six slaves in the hundred should be incapable of labour, while in the slave-importing countries the amount of non-effectives among the same number of individuals is not more than forty-eight. The difference in the relative expense of raising produce to which this single circumstance must give rise, may be easily appreciated.

But there are other considerations which must not be omitted in forming an estimate of the disadvantages under which the British colonist labours, in a competition with the foreign grower of West India produce. In our dependencies the proprietor still labours with but little mitigation under the hurtful effects of the old colonial system, from which it was the intention of Lord Goderich's Act* to relieve him. It is true, as a general axiom, that where trade is freed from restrictions, and left open and unfettered to public competition, the activity of commmercial enterprise may be expected rapidly to break down the barriers erected by a previous system of monopoly, and to introduce a salutary change into every department of merchandise. But there is something peculiar in our colonial traffic, which has retarded the progress and paralized the operation of this principle, depending, as it has been so long made to do, in all its ramifications, on its connection with the mother country. The Act in question removes the restrictive regulations formerly so rigidly enforced, which compelled all colonial produce to be shipped to this country in British bottoms, and all European supplies required by the plantations, to be sent from this country by a similar conveyance. But this boon has hitherto proved altogether illusory, on account of the impossibility of shaking off the trammels which previous engagements had created. Nor is it likely that this unfavourable state of things will very speedily be remedied. Our colonists are so generally bound by connections in the

* 6th George IV., cap. 114.

mother country, that they cannot, to any desirable extent, give encouragement to the establishment of commercial houses in the colonies, which might, on the spot, supply them with European articles, and purchase their colonial produce. There can, therefore, at present exist no useful competition in our dependencies to reduce the price of the former, or to furnish a near and advantageous market for the latter; and the old system must, for some time longer, continue in full force, expensive and injurious as it is, which places the colonial producer in a state of entire dependence on the British merchant both for the sale of his produce, and for the European supplies requisite for his own consumption. It has been calculated that the annual loss thus sustained by the body of West India planters, in extra freight and price of commodities, cannot be less than a million sterling.

I might mention some other well intended but hitherto inoperative provisions of Lord Goderich's Act, such as that which allows free importation at fixed duties from all countries which shall place our commerce on "the footing of the most favoured nations,"—a condition which has never yet been complied with by any country, and which, if it had been complied with, would have been of little avail, so long as the duties remain so high as 20 or 30 per cent.; but I am unwilling to enter minutely into a subject with which I cannot be supposed to be practically conversant; especially as what I have already stated seems sufficient to shew the insuperable difficulties with which our West India commerce has to contend, in the competition it has been brought into, with that of the foreign grower of the same produce.

Taking for granted, therefore, that you, Sir, and your companions in office are aware of the hopeless nature of that competition, I cannot doubt that you are seeking, with much anxiety, to discover some remedy for an evil so overwhelming;—and I think you must perceive that this remedy cannot be found in any fiscal regulations, practicable with foreign countries. Nothing seems to remain, therefore, but to look for it in the extension of the home market, which is at present glutted with colonial produce. This must necessarily lead government to examine the state of the taxes which affect West India commerce, with the view of considering how far any relaxation of these may be practicable, consistently with the duty they owe to the other great interests of the community.*

---

* While this publication has been going through the press, various schemes have been agitated in Parliament for relief of the West India proprietor, and Government have at length consented to a temporary measure, chiefly important on account of the principle which it recognises, and of the hope which it holds out, that it will soon be followed up by more effective concessions to the wants of the colonies and the comforts of the people. The measure in question is as follows:—

1. That there shall be charged for a time to be limited, the following duties upon sugar imported into the United Kingdom—viz.,

Upon all Brown, or Muscovado, or Clayed Sugar, being the produce of, and imported from, the British possessions in America, or the Island of Mauritius, the cwt., - - - -	£1	4	0
Upon all Brown or Muscovado, or Clayed Sugar, being the produce of, and imported from, the British possessions in the East Indies, the cwt.,	1	12	0
Upon all Brown or Muscovado, or Clayed Sugar, the produce of, or imported from, any other places, the cwt., - - - -	3	3	0

Although it is well known that the West India planters are at present labouring under great embarrassments, I do not think that the nature and extent of these embarrassments are generally appreciated, nor that the sinister bearing which the duties laid on colonial produce have on their prosperity, is sufficiently understood. It may be useful, therefore, to enter into some condensed details on this important subject, which I shall extract from public documents.

It appears that a memorial was, about a year ago, presented to Government by the West India body, in which they complained of the oppressive effects of a fixed duty on sugar of 27s. per cwt., which they truly alleged the fall of that article rendered altogether exorbitant. But, if their reasons for remonstrance were then strong, they have since acquired great additional force, as, in the course of last year, the prices of all the middling and lower qualities of sugar have decreased no less than 10 per cent.

The duty has at different periods borne the following proportion to the prices:—

From 1792 to 1796, the average price, exclusive of the duty, was 55s. 1d. per cwt., and the duty was 15s. per cwt., the duty being, in proportion to the price, 27¼ per cent.

---

2. That in lieu of the duties now charged on Molasses, the produce of, and imported from, any British Plantation, there shall be charged, for a time to be limited, a duty of 9s. for a cwt. thereof.

3. That eight-tenth parts of the bounties on Sugar, granted by an Act of the sixth year of his late Majesty, for granting bounties and allowances of Customs, shall be further continued.

From 1797 to 1798, the average price was 67s. 3d. per cwt., and the duty 17s. 6d., being in the proportion of 26 per cent.

In 1799 and 1800, the average price was 64s. 2¼d. per cwt., and the duty 18s. 2d. per cwt., being in the proportion of 28 per cent.

In 1801 and 1802, the average price was 52s. 7d. per cwt., and the duty was 20s. per cwt., being in the proportion of 38 per cent.

From 1803 (when the war duty of 10s. per cwt. was imposed) to 1823, inclusive, the average price was 46s. 4d. per cwt., and the duty (after deducting the provisional allowance of 3s.) was 27s., being in the proportion of 58¼ per cent.

In 1824, 1825, and 1826, the average price was 33s. 5d. per cwt., and the duty 27s., being in the proportion of 80½ per cent.

The average prices were not again published until the latter part of the year 1828.

During the year 1829 the price of sugar has been gradually falling. By the returns in June, the average price was only 29s. 6d. per cwt., while the duty, remaining at 27s., bore the greatly increased proportion to the price of 91½ per cent.

By the last returns, the price was 22s. per cwt., and the duty, being still 27s. was in the proportion of 122¾ per cent.

This statement is of itself sufficient to show the necessity of a reduction in duty. When the war tax of an additional 10s. per cwt. was imposed, it was considered that this measure pressed as heavily on our West India commerce as it even then could bear, and could

only be justified by a state of actual warfare. But since that time the price of sugars has fallen more than one half, viz. from 46s. to 22s. per cwt. How can it be expected, under such circumstances, that the permanent duty of 27s. per cwt. can be afforded?

But this is not all. On middling and inferior kinds of sugar, which form about three-fourths of the supply, there is a positive loss to a large amount. The lowest kinds do not sell for more than 17s. or 19s. per cwt., and on these the duty amounts to about 150 per cent. Now, the expense of freight, insurance, landing and sale charges, cannot be less than 8s. per cwt., which leaves only from 9s. to 11s. per cwt. for the expense of production, whereas that expense, even exclusive of the interest of the capital embarked, cannot, it is said, be estimated under 18s. per cwt. If this be the case, and I have no doubt it is near the truth, these low priced sugars are brought to the market at a loss of about 8s. per cwt., which is evidently ruinous, and cannot long be sustained.

It is impossible to attend to these facts without perceiving the policy, as regards the revenue, of affording some relaxation of duty. If the tax has become so oppressive as necessarily to discourage the growth of the article, the obvious result will be, that it must soon become unproductive by the diminution of cultivation. But there are other considerations which demonstrate the financial wisdom of a reduction of the impost.

A reference to the history of the sugar trade affords a palpable proof that the consumption of this article is materially repressed by the high price to which the du-

ty has raised it, and consequently that a reduction of the duty would greatly increase the consumption.

The *Edinburgh Review* for January last contains a statement, which I beg leave to quote, as it places this fact in a striking light:—

"In 1817," says the Reviewer, referring to an official table which he had inserted, "the price of sugar to the consumer, duty included, was 74s. 6d., the quantity entered for home consumption amounting to 2,960,794 cwts. In 1818 the price rose to 80s. 6d., and the quantity consumed fell to 1,457,707 cwts.; being a reduction of fully half the quantity consumed in the previous year. In 1819 the price again fell, duty included, to 69s., and the consumption immediately rose to 2,474,738 cwts. These facts strikingly evince the powerful effect of a rise in price in lessening, and of a fall in extending, consumption. There can be no question, indeed, that the increased consumption of sugar during the last three years has been mainly owing to its low price. In 1824, for example, the average price of sugar, exclusive of the duty, was under 32s., and the quantity consumed was 2,957,281 cwts. But in 1825 prices rose during the summer of that year to above 40s., and the consumption sunk to 2,655,959 cwts. It rose, with the fall of prices in 1826, to 3,255,075 cwts.; but in consequence of a rise from 12 to 20 per cent. in 1827, it declined to 3,021,191 cwts., and again rose, with a fresh fall, in 1828, to 3,285,843 cwts."

From this, and other data, into which I do not think it necessary at present to enter, the Reviewer deduces what appears to me the just, and incontrovertible conclusion, that a reduction in the tax of 9s. or 10s. per cwt., would, instead of diminishing, be actually the means of considerably increasing the revenue;—and that too, without any reference to the indirect effect which could not fail to be produced, by the relief such a measure would afford to the colonists, and the mercantile interest connected with them, whose prosperity

is of such essential importance to the finances, as well as to the general welfare of the country.*

Considered, therefore, merely with a view to the advantage of the revenue, there seems to be an obvious necessity for reducing this most disproportioned and destructive tax, which I do not see that Parliament can well resist. But when the arguments to which I have already adverted for sustaining and encouraging our colonies, derived from considerations of humanity as respects the negro population both of the West Indies and of Africa,—not to speak of the interests of the white colonists or of our home commerce,—are taken into view, it seems impossible that so many and such imperious calls can be disregarded.

The West India body also complain of the present state of our fiscal regulations as to rum, in connection with those which respect British spirits; and I cannot but think that an equalizing duty is imperiously called

---

* A most injurious attempt has been made by persons more zealous than wise to undervalue the advantage of the colonies to the mother country, with the view of aiding the measures of the ultra abolitionists. The simple statement of a few incontrovertible facts may be sufficient to disabuse those whose want of acquaintance with the subject may have led them to acquiesce in such a sentiment. According to the official returns printed by order of the House of Commons, the imports from the West India colonies, even now, amount to *nine millions* sterling, being upwards of one-fifth of the whole import trade of Great Britain. The exports amount to more than *four millions*. In Ireland the imports amount to £590,000—considerably more than *one third* of its whole foreign imports—the exports to £428,000;—while the whole amount of exports thence to foreign countries do not exceed £763,000!

for. But to this question I shall not further advert, except to say, that few measures would conduce more to the moral welfare of the lower orders of the people, than such as should materially restrict among them the use of *all kinds* of spirituous liquors. I never could understand the wisdom of that policy, which proposes to increase the public revenue, or to support the agricultural interest, by pandering to the morbid appetite of the vulgar for excess in drinking. Without adverting to the higher motives of religion and morality, it may well be asked how the prosperity of the state can ultimately be maintained by the demoralization of the great body of the people.*

In bringing these letters to a close, it may be advisable to collect into one point of view the general train of reasoning I have pursued, and the conclusions which I have considered myself justifiable in deducing from that reasoning.

It has, I flatter myself, been successfully shewn, that the slave population of the West Indies is in a state of remarkable and rapid amelioration, which their masters would be altogether incapable of resisting, even though they were universally desirous of doing so; that on the part of the whites, there is an equally remarkable and rapid change of opinion as well as feeling on the relative duties of master and slave, which corresponds with the alteration in the moral condition of the

* This subject, as well as that of the *duty on sugar*, has been under the consideration of Parliament since the above was written, and a measure very inadequate, but affording the hope of future improvement, has been adopted.

negroes, and operates in a salutary manner in increasing their improvement;—that, in short, in spite of the irritation and jealousies which have been excited in our western dependencies, by the measures adopted at home, there is a reciprocal action in operation, at once extensive and powerful, partly, indeed, deriving its origin and encouragement from those very measures, which is irresistibly carrying forward the black population of our colonies towards the blessings of freedom and civilization—the kindly influences of good will and friendly attentions being reflected from the master to his slave, and back again from the slave to his master;—that religion is doing her part in this great work, by taking deep hold of the mind, and powerfully modifying the conduct, of the negro race; and that the period is rapidly approaching when the whites must find it to be their interest as well as their duty to manumit the blacks, and thus to exchange the unwilling labour of bondmen for the more profitable services of a free and industrious peasantry, cheerfully afforded from a sense of mutual advantage. I hence deduced the conclusion, that it is the duty of government to abstain as much as possible from direct interference with the internal regulation of West India affairs, in matters connected with the management of the slaves, and to confine itself, at least for the present, to friendly advice and gentle guidance,—zealously co-operating in all measures of improvement—steadily but mildly repressing whatever may be attempted of an opposite tendency;—and, above all, taking the most effectual means of promoting a Christian education among the negro community. Nor

could I refrain from reminding the colonists of the responsibility which lies upon them in reference to their slaves, or from *earnestly* urging on them the necessity of attending to the united call of self-interest and of moral and religious duty, which requires them, by training and instruction, to prepare these dependants for their eventual enjoyment of the blessings of freedom. To all this I felt myself called upon to add,—as the best means of repressing the foreign slave trade, again revived with such extraordinary vigour, and of advancing the interests of the black as well as the white population of our Western dependencies,—the necessity of fostering our colonial commerce, which has been so alarmingly depressed, and the embarrassments of which having been partly created by maladministration at home, and especially by oppressive fiscal regulations, have rapidly increased, and are daily increasing.

If I could flatter myself that through you, Sir, my feeble voice should reach those influential individuals, who, by directing the destinies of this great empire, hold in their hands the springs which move the civilized world, I would tell them respectfully, but plainly and honestly, that the interests, not of our colonies only, but of Africa, and of Britain itself, are involved in the manner in which they acquit themselves of the important duties which belong to the colonial department—that other administrations, by trifling with a subject of such mighty importance, have treasured up for their present successors a responsibility of no common magnitude—that the time is arrived when the question, in all its bearings, must force itself on the public attention,—and that the country looks confidently to their firmness and political sagacity for the

suppression of such overwhelming evils;—in the West Indies, by the restoration of amity and confidence between master and slave, and between the white inhabitants and the mother country—in Africa, by the final abolition of that traffic which has so long been the opprobium of humanity—and in Britain, by the establishment of a wise and paternal system of government, which may impart its blessings equally to all, and which may unite in the bands of mutual sympathy every class of his Majesty's subjects in every quarter of his vast dominions.

NOTES.

LETTER II.

NOTE A.—Page 21.

It may perhaps be proper to call the attention of the more careless reader, to the bearing of the principle laid down in this chapter on the general argument. It is by no means meant to assert that, because Scripture has not condemned slavery by express precept, it is therefore a condition the principle of which Christianity sanctions and approves. The question stands in this respect, precisely on the same footing with that of the other disorders of civil society, which so abundantly prevailed in the days of our Saviour, but with which neither he nor his disciples directly intermeddled; and the studious manner in which the New Testament writers avoided any express condemnation of the tyranny, oppression, and injustice of the rulers under whom they lived, might with equal propriety be pleaded in justification of these crimes. The wisdom of such forbearance will appear sufficiently obvious, if we attend to the unhappy effect which would necessarily have been produced by an opposite conduct. Society was not then ripe for pure institutions, and, had these been rendered imperative by divine command, it is easy to see in what a painful and inextricable dilemma Christians would have found themselves.—Knowing, that they "ought to obey God, rather than man," they would have felt it neces-

sary to throw themselves out of the pale of civilized society, lest they should be subjected to the contamination of political powers and ordinances, on which Heaven had pronounced its curse; while the opposite necessity of living in the world, and of performing social and civil duties in the sphere where Providence had placed them, would have pressed upon their hearts, confounded their judgment, and, it may be, upset their faith. The method which infinite wisdom has adopted is free from this perplexity. Revelation lays down the principle, which by changing the disposition, and infusing right opinions, prepares society for just and beneficent institutions; and not till then could these institutions subsist in purity or operate with effect.

The practical working of this religious view on the slave question, is exceedingly salutary. Could a positive command be shewn, forbidding Christians to hold a fellow man in slavery, nothing could countervail the duty of immediate emancipation. No consideration of expediency either with reference to the master or slave, could for a moment be listened to. A divine mandate is peremptory and exclusive; and the sentence of religion would be "Fiat justitia ruat cœlum." But as the case actually stands, there is room for the reasoning and conclusions to be found in the text; and slavery only becomes sinful, when it is inconsistent with the temporal or spiritual welfare of the bondman. To this, however, a Christian master is bound carefully to look; for here religion steps in with its imperative command, and its awful sanctions.

But it is not to be concealed that many pious men have been unwilling to yield their assent, to what seems to me a plain and irresistible conclusion, and in opposition to that opinion, have laboured to prove that the condition of slavery is forbidden by express Christian precept. It may therefore be proper to bring authority against authority. Several of the most celebrated English Divines have borne their testimony in favour of the view taken of the subject by the author. Jortin states in so many words, that "the gospel hath not said that it is unlawful to have slaves;" and Warburton evidently takes this for granted, when,

instead of requiring immediate emancipation, he recommends to the Planters, to "hold out to the Colonists at large an example as to the treatment of their fellow creatures." But a still more direct testimony is borne to the same view, by the learned and excellent Dr. Shuttleworth, in his commentary on the very epistle which forms the subject of the second letter:

"St. Paul," says he, "appears to consider slavery rather as an abuse which the then established order of society had rendered necessary, than as an abomination at all events, and at any price to be inexorably rooted up. It became the necessary duty of an apostle, anxious rather for the promotion of substantial good, than for shewy and plausible systems of reform, to tolerate what neither himself nor the party addressed had power to redress." And again—"From the feeling manner in which this perplexing topic is discussed in the epistle before us, one truly important lesson is, at all events, to be derived; namely, with what liberality of charitable candour a Christian may hold his communings with society, in his passage through a world, many of whose usages he disapproves, yet where no necessary reason exists for attributing improper motives to the particular individuals whose conduct may accidentally differ from his own." *

It were easy to multiply authorities, but one other quotation may suffice; and I take it from the writings of Dr. Paley, whose fame both as a divine and a moralist entitles him, on such a subject, to more than ordinary consideration.

"Slavery was a part of the civil constitution of most countries when Christianity appeared, yet no passage is to be found in the Christian Scriptures by which it is condemned and prohibited. The truth is, the emancipation of slaves should be *gradual*, and be carried on by provisions of *law*, and under the protection of *civil government*. Christianity can only operate as an *alterative*." †

---

* Shuttleworth's Paraphrastic Translation of the Apostolical Epistles, with notes.

† Moral and Political Philosophy, vol. I. 236.

LETTER VIII.

NOTE. B.—Page 76.

That the improvement of public sentiment in regard to Missionaries and religious instructors is real and extensive there can be no doubt; but candour requires the admission, that in some quarters much of the old leaven still remains; and I cannot omit the mention of one case which has lately come under the eye of the Colonial Secretary, and with regard to which he has instituted an inquiry. The facts, as reported by Mr. Whitehouse, a Methodist Missionary, stationed at St. Ann's, Jamaica, (for the truth of which however I cannot pretend to vouch,) are briefly as follow:—Mr. Betty, a magistrate in that parish, having in the month of June last year (1829), heard that the leading slave on the estate of Rural Retreat, of which he has the charge as attorney, was appointed a catechist of the reporter's chapel in the neighbourhood, and that he had sufficient influence to induce many of the other negroes to attend that place of worship, sent for him, and insisted on his not only giving up attendance himself, but using his powers of persuasion to withdraw others also. When the man, whose name is Henry Williams, respectfully declined to do what his conscience forbade, and what his master had certainly no right even as a slave-master to demand, he was sent to a workhouse in the neighbourhood, remarkable for the severity of the punishments which it inflicts, where he remained from the end of June, till sometime in the month of September. The manner of his release from this wretched place, and the state in which he was found on his return to the property, shall be quoted without comment, from a letter of Mr. Whitehouse, dated 4th November, 1829. "I expected, ere this, to have informed you of his (Henry Williams') death; but he still lives. Such are the punishments in the Rodneyhall Workhouse, that, in a few weeks, he became so ill, that the manager had the chains taken

from him, and placed him in the hospital, where it was expected he would give up the ghost. His poor wife came to me almost distracted, and begged that I would undertake the cause of her nearly murdered husband; and I myself was distressed beyond description. My instructions prevented my interference, and yet I knew of a friendless individual who was being literally butchered for no other offence than that of coming to our chapel. After thinking on the subject for a considerable time, I sat down and wrote a letter to the editor of 'The Watchman,' under the signature of a Subscriber. The subject of this letter was religious intolerance; and though names were omitted, it was conceived in terms which could not be misunderstood, as it directly applied itself to the parties accused. This letter was immediately published, and the conduct of the offending individual was severely censured in an able article, written by the Editors of 'The Watchman, and Jamaica Free Press.'* This letter, and the article alluded to, had the desired effect; and in a few days, Henry was let out of prison; but, poor man, he was so cut up by the severe flogging he had received, that his life was despaired of. When he returned to the property, for several weeks he was confined to his bed, and obliged to lie on his stomach day and night, his poor back being a mass of corruption."*

After making every allowance for the exaggeration occasioned by the excited feelings of the reporter, this is a statement which, if true in its general bearing, cannot be read without horror and indignation. For the honour of human nature it is to be hoped that there are few such instances in the present day; but it is impossible not to perceive that there must be still something

* This is the periodical alluded to at page 56, as conducted by persons of colour.

* The only answer which Mr. Betty has yet given to the communication of government on this most painful subject is, in substance, that he was entitled to punish his slave for insolence and disobedience of orders, that he acted according to law, and that none—not even government itself—had a right to interfere. This may be spirited, but it is not satisfactory.

which imperiously demands correction, should the system permit, and the state of society tolerate such inhuman persecution. Nothing but the firm persuasion that the progress of West Indian society is rapidly sweeping such revolting abuses away, and that the direct interference of the legislature at home, would only retard that progress and aggravate these abuses, could induce the author to advocate forbearance.

The opportunity is too inviting to be resisted, of mentioning an occurrence in another country, which commencing under similar circumstances, ended in a very different result; and for the truth of which the writer can vouch, as it took place in the circle of his own immediate connections. Mr. Ravenscroft, a proprietor of land and slaves in one of the Carolinas was actuated by the same horror of Methodism as seems to possess the mind of the St. Ann's magistrate; and it happened several years ago that a preacher of that sect arriving in his neighbourhood, had made an impression on the minds of his slaves, similar to that produced on the negroes of Rural Retreat. In this instance too, the most zealous and influential of the converts was a slave whose mental qualities and previous good conduct had gained him the confidence of his master. Mr. Ravenscroft, like Mr. Betty, formed the resolution of putting a stop to the fanatical contagion, as he considered it, by a public example, and hearing that his confidential slave, notwithstanding due warning, and even punishment, still persisted in the forbidden practice of congregating at his hut, after work hours, the other negroes on the estate, for the purpose of giving them religious instruction, he proceeded one evening in a state of exasperation to the place of meeting, carrying with him that tremendous instrument of torture, the cart whip, in the full determination to inflict exemplary chastisement on the rebel, with his own hand. It was after nightfall, and, approaching unobserved, he was struck and arrested in his progress by hearing the sound of prayer. He listened. The good man was putting up an earnest and affecting petition to the throne of grace for his master. Riveted to the spot, and half relenting, he continued to listen after the prayer was ended.

The speaker began an exhortation in which he eloquently and earnestly inculcated on his little audience, the Christian duty of the forgiveness of injuries, of submission to the authority of their master, of diligence in their prescribed tasks, and of honesty and fidelity in all the relations of life. He alluded to his own case in terms calculated to palliate the persecution of which he had been the object, and to soothe and mollify the irritated feelings of his sable hearers, and last of all, he spoke of his master in terms of such respect and affection, that the conscience-struck listener could restrain himself no longer. He burst into tears, and hastily retiring home, reflected deeply on the extraordinary scene of which he had been an unseen witness. The Bible which could inspire such principles, was from this day Ravenscroft's constant companion; and it is easy to believe that the worthy negro was received by his master, to use the emphatic language of Paul, "Not now as a slave, but above a slave, a brother beloved." It may be enough to add that Ravenscroft's principles and views were now entirely changed, and that, leaving his former employment, he entered the ecclesiastical profession, became a most zealous and pious and eloquent minister of religion, and died a few months ago, a Bishop of the Episcopal Church of America, universally respected, admired, and beloved.†

It is possible that some who read this account may be inclined to scoff; but to those who know any thing of the spirit of Christianity, the contrast between the two narratives cannot fail to convey a most interesting and impressive lesson.

---

† A history of this worthy Prelate's life is now in the act of publication in America.

LETTER VIII.

NOTE C—Page 83.

On the question of compensation, slightly alluded to at page 84, it may be proper for the Author to express his views somewhat more at large, as it is a subject on which so much difference of opinion exists. The argument of the opponents of this claim is, that, to hold fellow-men in slavery, being in itself unlawful—being, in fact, a sin against human nature—such an infraction of principle can confer no rights:—that the slave-owners are in the situation of thieves and robbers, detected in the possession of goods acquired by rapine, and should therefore be compelled to restore to the negroes their unalienable privilege of freedom without any remuneration. Now, whatever might be said for the soundness of this mode of reasoning considered in itself, and however ready the opposite party might be to overlook the consequences which its universal establishment might have in unsettling the right of property throughout the world, it is certain that such a plea cannot be consistently maintained by the British nation with reference to colonial slavery. If the slave population of the West Indies was acquired by rapine, as is readily admitted, this crime was perpetrated, I repeat, not by the West India colonists, but by the national government, and, therefore, by the whole community of which its members are the representatives; and this, let me add, not by a single act, but by a long series of deliberate decrees and transactions.

It may be proper to look, for a little, into the history of the slave trade, that we may see how this matter actually stands.

Long before the existence of our colonies, the slave-trade was established by Queen Elizabeth, who took a personal share in it. It was not only encouraged by all the Stuart race after they came to the throne of England, but, subsequently to the

Revolution, it was still more directly favoured. By King William it was declared to be "highly beneficial to the nation;" and in 1713, Great Britain even converted it into a subject of national traffic; having, by the Assiento Treaty, bound herself to supply the Spanish colonies with 144,000 slaves at the rate of 4,800 per annum!—From that period downwards, the trade was openly encouraged and protected by Parliament, as well as by the administration; and it is candidly allowed by Mr. Stephen, a zealous advocate for uncompensated abolition, that "in the more modern acts there is no reserve in repect to the condition of these exiles, as far as a vague name can define it; for the commerce in slaves, *eo nomine*, has been expressly recognised and regulated."*

But, what is more than all this, the colonists, instead of being the chief promoters of the trade, were, in fact, the very first body who took any steps to restrain and even to abolish it; and these steps were *resisted* by the mother country. In 1760, South Carolina (then a British colony) passed an act to prohibit farther importation, which was rejected by Government, with a reprimand to the governor, who sanctioned it. In 1765, Jamaica made an attempt, at least to restrict the traffic, which was stopped in its progress by the interference of the governor, who declared such an act to be inconsistent with his instructions; and so late as 1774, when the endeavour to restrict the trade was renewed by Jamaica, it was positively refused by the Earl of Dartmouth, then president of the Board of Trade, who, in answer to a remonstrance of the agent for that island, made the following extraordinary declaration:—"We cannot allow the colonies to check or discourage, in any degree, a traffic so beneficial to the nation!!"

These facts incontestibly prove that Britain has made herself, in the most unqualified manner, a party to slavery; that she has constituted, so far as law can constitute, a right of property, in slaves; and that the slave-owners hold that property, pre-

* Mr. Stephen's Slavery of the West India Colonies, p. 14.

cisely in the same manner as all other possessions are held,—by a legal tenure. It is not enough to say, in opposition to this, that such property is contrary to the common rights of humanity, and therefore cannot be constituted even by law. Admitting the truth of such a position, it might indeed be available in the question between them and the slaves; but it is not applicable to the case, so far as the question lies between the proprietor and the legislature. "The law must be binding," as Mr. Barham forcibly reasons, "at least on those who made it. If the legislature, with a view to national advantage, has committed injustice, and now, with a view to national injustice, would repair the wrong, it is for *the nation* to pay the price of its wrong, and not for the individual who acted in conformity to the law. To fix on the present proprietor the cost of redeeming the acts of the nation at large, would be concluding a series of injustice to Africa, by an act of injustice to a portion of your own subjects; with regard to whom, your first laws would have been a fraud, and your last would be a robbery."

Though this reasoning might admit of some qualification, it appears to me, upon the whole, so incontrovertible, that, were I persuaded of the duty of immediate enfranchisement, I could not fail at the same time to argue the necessity of indemnification to the masters—a measure, however, which presents difficulties of no ordinary magnitude, on account not merely of the question of relative responsibility, but chiefly of the impossibility of ascertaining before-hand the extent of the injury which the conversion of slaves into free labourers would inflict. So violent a change might, on the one hand, prove to be the loss of every thing; and, on the other, it might be found, instead of detriment, to be productive of advantage. So widely, therefore, might appreciators differ in arbitrating between the slave-owners and Government, according to their varying views of the consequences of emancipation, as well as of the principle on which indemnity was to be afforded, that I scarcely see how the question could be settled. Happily however the view which I have taken involves no such difficulties.

NOTE D.—PAGE 87.

The following statement by the agent of the Free Coloured Inhabitants of St. Kitt's, was in May last transmitted to Sir George Murray, and has elicited from the Secretary the subjoined favourable reply. While the one document shews that, in this Colony, that unhappy race, though comparatively much more numerous, are not in a more fortunate situation than théir compeers in Jamaica, the other presents a more cheering view, as it evinces the existence of a liberal feeling towards that body in a high and influential quarter.

No. 1.

Political State of the Free Coloured Inhabitants of the Island of St. Christopher's.

Their disqualifications by law are—From sitting as Members in the House of Assembly, and from being called to the Bar, or practising as Attorneys at Law.

Their disqualifications by custom are—from sitting on Juries, whether Grand, Petit, or Coroners. From holding any Public Offices of Trust or Emolument. From holding Commissions in the Local Militia, although they form the protective force of the Colony, and also from the Magistracy.

To these grievances may be added, that although equally taxed with the white inhabitants for the support of the public establishments of the Colony, they are not permitted to avail themselves of any advantages arising from them. For example—the usual expenditure of the Colony, exclusive of the Governor's salary, is about 3,500*l.* currency annually, and the sum of 1,100*l.* forms *one item* which is for the support of an establishment for the clothing, maintenance, and education of sixty-four children, all of whom are *white*—while no such establishment in the Colony owes its existence to any assistance derived from funds of the public treasury.

A coloured person is required, when he lands on the shores of St. Kitt's, to give proof of his freedom within three days, or he is liable to be dealt with as a runaway slave. This law was passed in 1817 : and although I know of no instance wherein it has been acted upon, still it is in force, and therefore may be. A coloured person is at all times, on landing in the Colony, compelled to give security for his good conduct, a requirement which is not exacted from a white person, though he shall be a *foreigner*.

This invidious distinction operates upon the feelings of the coloured population in St. Kitt's in such a manner as to deter them from entering the doors of the Established Church, and compels them to frequent Sectarian places of worship, for certain pews at the *extreme ends* of the church are allotted to them; and, even after death, the feelings of their survivors are harrowed up by being compelled to inter the body of a coloured person in a distinct portion of the church yard, as if the mixture of their ashes would be contamination to the whites.

Comparative Numbers of the Free Coloured and Black Inhabitants and Whites—about $3\frac{1}{2}$ *to* 1 *in favour of the Free Coloured and Black.*

It is but fair to state that the white inhabitants are the most extensive landed proprietors ; but very few proprietors reside in the Colony, and the absentees, generally speaking, are substituted by very illiterate men : there are, however, some coloured proprietors in the Island. The commercial interest of the Colony is mainly upheld by the coloured population.

Until the year 1823, they were unable by law, to vote for their representatives; the elective franchise was conceded to them then on petition. They have annually, since that period, availed themselves of this constitutional mode of praying for a redress of the injuries they are sustaining without obtaining any

decided reply from the legislature, until the Session of 1829, when the Board of Council passed a prospective bill to admit them to a full participation of all the rights enjoyed by the whites. This bill, however, was rejected *in toto* by the House of Assembly: who, on their part, came to a resolution not to depart from the principle to *receive* and determine upon private bills in favour of certain individuals, whenever they should be presented to the House.

No. II.

"Secretary Sir George Murray presents his compliments to Mr. Cleghorn, and begs to thank him for the statements he has sent.

"Sir George Murray being of opinion that the removal of those disqualifications which law or custom has heretofore imposed upon free persons of colour in the West Indian Colonies, would be a great benefit to those Colonies, as well as an act of justice and of sound policy, it is his intention to continue to recommend measures having that tendency upon every proper occasion that offers.

"Colonial Office, May 6, 1830."

(Addressed)

R. CLEGHORN, Esq.

3, Cecil Street, Strand.

NOTE E.—PAGE 93.

The improvement which is rapidly taking place in the character of the Mulattoes, has been repeatedly stated in the Colonial Assembly of Jamaica, and seems to be universally admitted. About four years ago, when a motion was made in this legislature by Mr. Grignon, Member for St. James's, for allowing to that race the elective franchise, in answer to some

observations against the motion, this improvement was strongly urged: he said, "that he differed from the honourable father of the house in respect to this class of the community. He did entertain similar opinions some years ago; but when he saw so great a difference in them for the better, knowing as he did many families bringing up their children in a highly creditable manner—giving them educations of a superior order; when he had seen on late occasions of alarm as great zeal exerted by them for the preservation of peace and order in the community, as evinced by the White Militia, his opinions had changed in their favour, and he conceived them fairly entitled to further privileges."

NOTE F.—Page 97.

The following affecting picture of the situation of the Mulatto race, was drawn in 1793, by Bryan Edwards, the celebrated historian of the West Indies.

"There is this mischief arising from the system of rigour ostensibly maintained by the laws, against this unfortunate race of people, that it tends to degrade them in their own eyes, and in the eyes of the community to which they belong. This is carried so far, as to make them at once wretched in themselves and useless to the public. It very frequently happens, that the lowest white person, considering himself as greatly superior to the richest and best educated free man of colour, will disdain to associate with a person of the latter description, treating him, as the Egyptians treated the Israelites, with whom they held it an abomination to eat bread. The consequence is, these unhappy people are a burden and reproach to society. They have no motives of sufficient efficacy, either to engage them in the service of their country, or in profitable labour for their own advantage; their progress in civility and knowledge, is animated by no encouragement, their attachment is received without approbation, and their diligence exerted without reward."

Forty years have nearly passed away since this description was written, and there can be no doubt that in this period a better class has sprung up to whom it does not apply; but still the demoralizing circumstances in which they are placed, cannot fail to continue its influence on the great mass of that society; and their debased state has been pleaded as a reason for denying them farther privileges. But this very circumstance renders the duty of pursuing a system of melioration, considered both in a political and religious point of view, only the more imperative. Is it well, first to inflict an injury, and then to urge the consequences of that injustice, as a reason for perpetuating it? Or, can evils which misgovernment has produced, or dangers which it has created, be removed by a pertinacious adherence to the system in which they originated?

THE END.

LONDON:
HENRY BAYLIS, JOHNSON'S-COURT, FLEET-STREET.