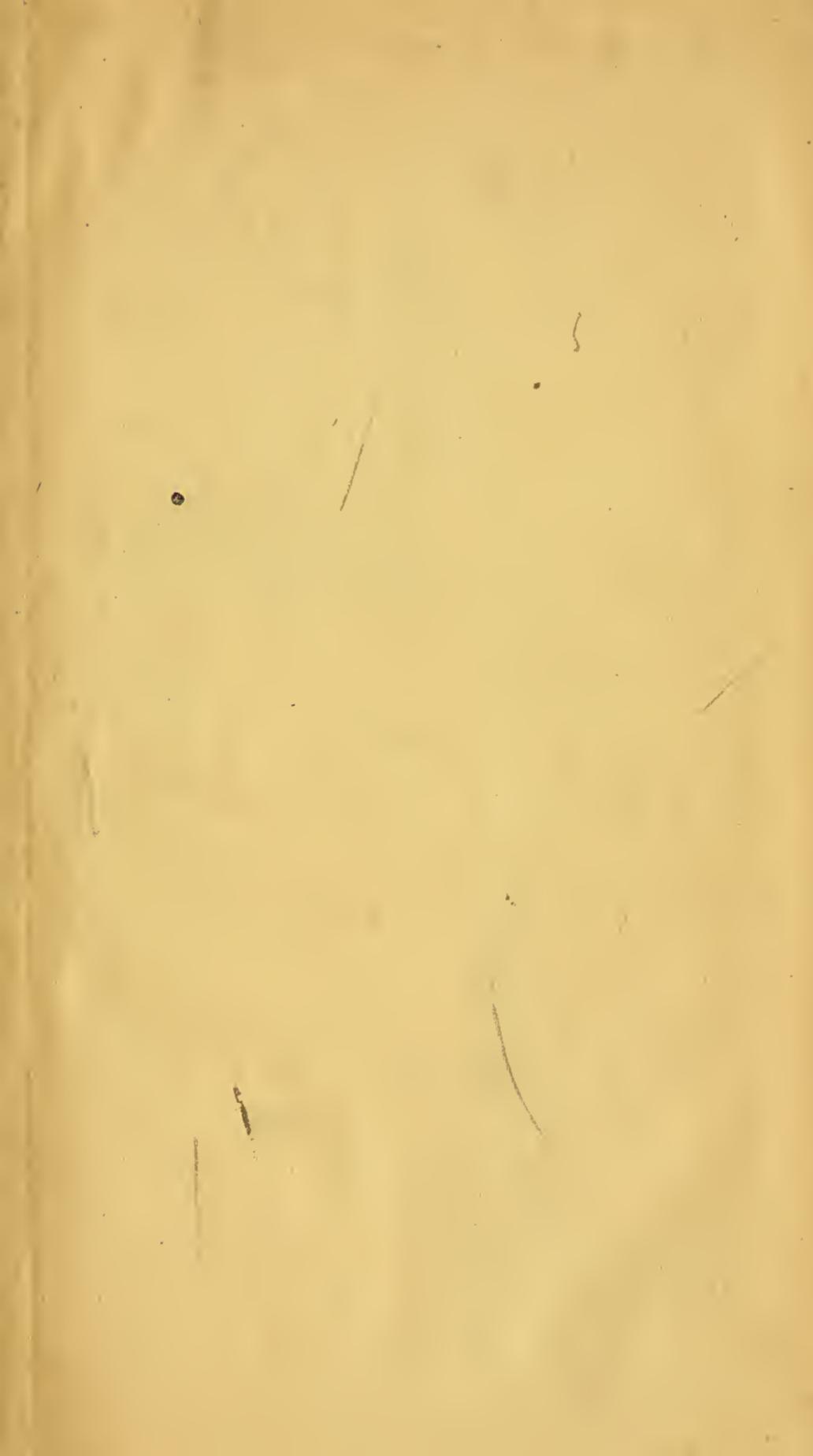


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SUBSTANCE

OF THE

SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE MEETING

OF THE

EDINBURGH SOCIETY

FOR THE

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY,

ON

OCTOBER 19, 1830.

BY

ANDREW THOMSON, D.D.  
MINISTER OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH.

EDINBURGH:

*Printed at the Request of the Committee,*

AND

PUBLISHED BY WILLIAM WHYTE AND CO.

13, GEORGE STREET;

AND SOLD BY ALL THE BOOKSELLERS.

M.DCCC,XXX.

## NOTICE.

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IN writing out the following Speech, the object has rather been to do justice to the argument, than to give an exact and literal report of what Dr. Thomson delivered. Some parts accordingly are somewhat abridged, and others are considerably enlarged. Still, however, those who were present at the Meeting will recognise in these pages the statements, and reasonings, and in a great measure the very language, to which they listened on that occasion.

The Speech is published with the view of vindicating the Committee of the Edinburgh Anti-Slavery Society for the step which they have taken—of laying before the public, an outline at least of what may be advanced in support of the immediate abolition of Slavery—and of thus advancing the cause of truth, justice, and charity.

It may be proper to add, that the publication has taken place at the request, and under the sanction of the Committee.

## ERRATA.

- Page 12, line 3 from bottom, *for* "inversion," *read* "invasion"  
— 16, — 5 from bottom, *for* "in," *read* "or"  
— 23, — 11 from bottom, *for* "resolution," *read*, "resolutions"  
— 32, — 8 from top, *for* "as," *read* "or"

# SPEECH

DELIVERED AT THE MEETING

OF THE

EDINBURGH ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY.

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MR. CHAIRMAN—LADIES AND GENTLEMEN—I beg leave to submit to this meeting a Petition which has been prepared by the Committee of the Edinburgh Anti-Slavery Society, with the view of its being laid before both Houses of Parliament, founded on the resolutions just now agreed to, for the purpose of asking the Legislature to grant what we consider to be absolutely necessary in the present circumstances of the slavery question; and I begin with reading the petition, as it may be the means of removing certain misconceptions which have been entertained, and counteracting certain misrepresentations which have been industriously circulated, respecting the principles that we maintain, and the object that we pursue. (Here Dr. Thomson read the petition, which, after alluding to what was done in 1823, to the subsequent ineffectual attempts at arrangement, and to the grounds on which slavery is to be condemned, concludes with words of the following import).

“That your petitioners therefore do approach your most Honourable House, not only with a deep feeling of compassion for 800,000 oppressed and suffering slaves; but under the heavier pressure of a conscience burdened with the guilt of participating in the iniquitous oppression; and with all the energy with which a petitioning people can respectfully urge a representative legislature, do implore your most Honourable House in its wisdom to adopt effectual measures for the immediate and total abolition of Slavery, throughout the Colonies of the Empire.

“And that, at the same time, your petitioners, equally anxious for the safety and improvement of the black population, and for the securing to the white inhabitants the uninjured and peaceful enjoyment of their legitimate possessions, do also petition your most Honourable House, contemporaneously with the decree for the abolition of slavery, to make such provisional enactments as shall be necessary or expedient, for protecting the white population, if their safety shall appear to be endangered; for promoting the temporal welfare and moral improvement of the negroes; and, in general, for securing the interests of all parties, who may be affected by the great measure of emancipation.”

I was anxious that the meeting should hear, in the outset, the concluding part of the petition, because it goes to contradict the misappre-

hensions and misrepresentations I have alluded to. When, in virtue of my privilege, as a member of the Society, I took the liberty of moving an amendment upon the resolutions proposed at the former meeting, I said that I desiderated the word "immediate" in these resolutions; but it must be in the recollection of every man, who was present on that occasion, that I qualified my declaration by an expression of those very sentiments which are contained in the conclusion of the petition you have now heard read. I am the more anxious that this should be known, because not only the enemies of the abolition of slavery have laid hold of that single word, and severed it most unjustly from its proper accompaniments, but even those who agree with us as to the necessity of abolition, and only differ from us as to the period at which it should be effected, have chosen, in their newspaper advertisement, to change the word *immediate* into *instant*, evidently for the purpose of rendering our measure more obnoxious, and taken good care to cut away from it the explanations by which it was qualified. And this very day, they have been circulating among you, as you entered the room, a hand-bill with the obvious design of persuading you, by a perverted application of the term *practicable*, to regard our views as utterly chimerical and absurd—a circumstance the more to be wondered at, that they yesterday solicited us to grant them a portion of our funds to assist them in getting forward their petition for gradual emancipation; and that if they were not greatly encouraged, they were not at least absolutely or finally refused.

At the former meeting, many persons were alarmed, or pretended to be alarmed, at the word "immediate," and spread abroad the report that, according to our proposal, the legislature should pass resolutions, or the government should issue an order, declaring that the slaves are all forthwith free. Such an idea, I will venture to say, never entered into the mind of a human being connected with this Society. The word *immediate* may no doubt be considered as a strong word; but you will observe that it is used as contrasted with the word *gradual*. And were I to criticise the term *gradual* as certain opponents have treated the term *immediate*, I could easily, by the help of a little quibbling, bring you to the conclusion, that as hitherto employed it means that the abolition is never to take place, and that, by putting it into their petition, they are to be understood as deprecating rather than asking the emancipation of the slaves. "*Immediate*," they argue, "evanishes as soon as you utter it; it is gone before your petition reaches parliament." How absurd! If I should say to my servant while engaged in work, "You must go to the south side of the town with a message for me *immediately*," is it indeed implied in the order I have given him, that he could not fulfil it, unless he set off without his hat, without his coat, without his shoes, without those habiliments which are requisite for his appearing decently in the streets of Edinburgh, and executing the task that I had assigned him? (*Hear, hear, and laugh.*) The meaning of the word as used by us is perfectly clear, and cannot be misapprehended by any one: it is not to be made a subject of metaphysical animadversion: it is to be considered and understood under the direction of common sense, and especially as modified and expounded by those statements with which it is associated both in our resolutions and in the petition; and

viewed in that light, *immediate abolition* is not merely an intelligible phrase, but one that does not warrant a particle of the alarm which some have affected to take at it, and is not liable to any one of those objections which some have been pleased to make to it.

Sir, we found our petition for immediate abolition on those great principles which we all agree in maintaining to be the only right rule of human and Christian conduct, and which you have heard so well stated by my reverend friend Mr. Buchanan. We hold that *man cannot have property in man.* (*Cheers.*) No man is entitled to make himself the slave of another. Still less is he entitled to make a slave of his fellow-creature. That he may be empowered to purchase his fellow-creature, to keep him as his property, or to treat him as a slave, he must have authority from God, who is the great sovereign of the world, who may do as he will with his own, who may punish his subjects in the manner that is agreeable to himself, and who, we are assured, as judge of all the earth, will do that which is right. But he who, without divine authority—and surely the West India slave-holders will not have the courage to plead such a sanction—claims a right of property in human beings, claims that which violates all that is sacred and true. That man cannot hold property in man is a proposition which is self-evident: it does not bear an argument: and he who maintains it, must be prepared to admit, that if the white man can hold property in the black man, the black man can hold property in the white man,—a doctrine which, as soon as it is carried into operation, breaks up the whole frame of society, and reduces all things into absolute anarchy and confusion.\* (*Cheers.*) Slavery is hostile to the original and essential rights of our common humanity—contrary to the inflexible and paramount demands of moral justice—at eternal variance with the spirit and maxims of revealed religion—inimical to all that is merciful in the heart, and holy in the conduct—and on these accounts, necessarily exposed and subject to the curse of Almighty God. (*Great applause.*) And if this be a correct description of the demerit of slavery, and if we engage in a system possessing such characteristics, we are sinning in the sight of our Maker, and there lies upon us an awful and overwhelming responsibility. The guilt does not consist merely in *making* men slaves; it consists as much in *keeping* them slaves. The present slave-holders, and their advocates in this country, cannot escape by setting up such a distinction. It avails them nothing. For if it be unlawful, iniquitous, and unchristian, to steal a man and force him into bondage, it must be equally unlawful, iniquitous, and unchristian, to retain him in that state, whether he has been purchased, or received as a gift, or got by inheritance, or obtained in any other way whatever. The crime is the same in both cases.

\* An illustration of this may be found in the treatment of white people—of British Christians, by the Algerines. Why was there an armament sent out, and a war prosecuted to rescue the former from the bondage they were kept in by the latter? Is moral justice different in one part of the world from what it is in another? Is it indeed maintained that might is right, and that right is might? Is this the principle which God has established in the world? And is it to be avowed by our statesmen and our moralists, that the strong may, at any time and in any place, make slaves of the weak?

The unfortunate victim of cupidity is deprived of that personal freedom which is his birthright: it is taken from him, or it is withheld from him—no matter which: and he thereby suffers a wrong which is denounced by the law of nature and by the law of revelation, and which cannot be persevered in by us, or receive countenance from us, without involving us in moral guilt. (*Hear, hear.*)

Such, Sir, are the principles which we maintain on this great question. And when we adopt these principles as the rule of our judgment, and the guide of our conduct, you must admit that we take up our position upon ground which is immovable. We stand upon a foundation which is composed of sound and durable materials, which is linked by indissoluble ties to the throne of the eternal God, and which, assail it as our enemies may, can never be overthrown. (*Long continued cheers.*) What then are we to do as moral and religious and accountable beings? Are we to view the subject of emancipation as a mere matter of state policy, or financial arrangement? Are we to have our attention occupied and engrossed with minute inquiries into what may be its profit and its loss, its influence on the revenue, or its effects on commerce and trade? Are we to wait till we hear and discuss and decide upon all the allegations that may be made, and all the sophistry that may be urged, by those who are more immediately concerned in upholding slavery, and evidently determined that it shall not cease? No, Sir: it is ascertained without reference to any of these circumstances—it is dictated by unchangeable truth and rectitude, and is therefore put beyond the reach of controversy, that slavery is a crime; that to engage or to persist in it is to contract guilt in the sight of heaven; and, consequently, that being aware of this, we are bound to make no delay in hastening out of the transgression, and putting an end to it, wherever it has obtained a footing in our dominions. To say that we will come out of the sin by degrees—that we will only forsake it slowly, and step by step—that we will pause and hesitate and look well about us before we consent to abandon its gains and its pleasures—that we will allow another age to pass by ere we throw off the load of iniquity that is lying so heavy upon us, lest certain secularities should be injuriously affected—and that we will postpone the duty of “doing justly and loving mercy,” till we have removed every petty difficulty out of the way, and got all the conflicting interests that are involved in the measure reconciled and satisfied;—to say this, is to trample on the demands of moral obligation, and to disregard the voice which speaks to us from heaven. The path of duty is plain before us; and we have nothing to do but to enter it at once, and to walk in it without turning to the right hand or to the left. Our concern is not with the result that may follow our obedience to the divine will. Our great and primary concern is to obey that will. God reigns over his universe in the exercise of infinite perfection: he commands us to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke; and submitting, without procrastination, and without any attempts at compromise, to that command, we may be assured that he will take care of all the effects that can be produced by compliance with his authority, and give demonstration to the truth that obedience to his behests is our grand and only security for a prosperous lot.

We are by no means indifferent to the expediency of the case. On the contrary, we think ourselves prepared to prove, by fair reasoning and by ascertained fact, that the expediency of the thing is all on our side ; that immediate abolition is the only secure and proper way of attaining the object which we all profess to have in view ; that to defer the measure to a distant period, and to admit the propriety of getting at it by a course of mitigation, is the surest mode of frustrating every hope we might otherwise entertain, and giving over the slaves to interminable bondage. To this topic I shall by and by take the liberty of directing your attention. But, in the mean time, I cannot desist from pressing it upon the meeting, that the principles on which we plead for abolition at all, go directly and irresistibly to the duty and necessity of *immediate* abolition. We cannot keep a human being in the condition of a slave unless we can show a warrant from God for doing so, or impiously assume the prerogative of God, and unjustly encroach on the undeniable rights of our brother. We can show no such warrant ; and nothing therefore remains for us but to abandon the impiety and injustice which we have been perpetrating, by instantly setting the bondsman free. The very proposal to continue in the practice of this sinful domination, till we have settled all the inferior questions which have been mixed up with it, and adjusted all the *pros* and *cons* of a worldly expediency which have been brought into the discussion of it, casts a doubt on the ultimate and effectual abatement of what we profess so much to abhor. Our postponement of the moral obligation indicates such comparative indifference to what should be the paramount motive in a Christian's mind, that there is little chance of our pressing forward to the ultimate abolition, with that energy of purpose, and resoluteness of exertion, which its accomplishment will require. And, descending from the elevation on which religion has placed us, and where we can fight the battles of truth and equity and mercy with advantage, we come down to the level on which our adversaries choose to combat, because they can there give us misrepresentation for fact, sophistry for argument, and promise for performance ; and in this way we not only desert the post to which duty binds us, but put the whole cause in jeopardy, and leave it very much at the mercy of those men who will consent to *gradual* abolition, or to the measures which are implied in it, merely because they can thereby and without much difficulty defeat the scheme of final and total emancipation.

Keeping by these views, we have no occasion to go into the details of the slave system, or to prove the evil of it by special instances of cruelty and oppression. We are under no embarrassment from having to charge individuals with acts of inhumanity, or to bring forward such a number of facts as may give a practical demonstration of the infelicity and misery of that state which we wish to abolish. Many individuals among the slave-holders may be distinguished by their consideration and kindness towards the unfortunate beings who are subjected to their authority. I have no doubt many of them are entitled to that praise,—and let it be supposed that all of them endeavour to make their slaves as comfortable and happy as slaves can be. At any rate I am not one of those who would pass even upon that class of men an unqualified and

sweeping sentence of condemnation. I am willing to allow that, as to the instances of atrocity which have been adduced, there has been sometimes unintentional mistake, and sometimes wilful exaggeration,\* and that, after picturing certain scenes of severe exaction and tyrannical punishment, it is not fair to assert that these are only specimens of what is happening every day and every hour in every corner of every estate. I can dispense with such statements altogether: and I return to the grand principle that man cannot have property in man. (*Cheers.*) To make or to keep him a slave is to violate that charter of liberty which God has given to every human being whom he has made. Justice and humanity equally reclaim against such a robbery of inherent right. And I need nothing more to satisfy me that the slave must be miserable, because on the inherent right which he possesses must be based all that is great in character or happy in condition,—deprive him of the one and he necessarily loses the other. If any thing else be requisite to give me a full impression of the wretchedness of the slave, it is to be found in this, that his master is invested with absolute power over him as if he were a mere inferior animal; and knowing, as we do, from all our experience of human nature, that absolute power must be abused where it is held and exercised for purposes of aggrandizement, and where those who are subject to it are continually exposed to its caprices and its resentments, we cannot doubt that the portion of the slave, as a sensitive, intellectual, and moral being, must, in ten thousand instances, be that of bitter suffering and intolerable debasement. This I hold to be an essential characteristic of slavery; I could not doubt of its tendency and effects being what I have now described, though there were not a single instance of the fact upon record. And, therefore, as it involves in it impious usurpation,—radical injustice,—boundless oppression and inhumanity,—as these horrid attributes are inseparable from its very existence, how can we, who are a Christian people, forbear calling upon our Christian Legislature, to proceed without compromise or reserve to its immediate, its complete, its perpetual extinction?

But, Sir, though the production of particular cases is not at all indispensable to my argument for immediate emancipation, it may be useful for the purpose of giving a more distinct and forcible demonstration of the malignant nature of the slave system; and, therefore, I shall bring before you,—not a lengthened detail of atrocities, though that might be easily done, but only a selection, from which may be seen, at once, the miserable condition of the slaves themselves, and the light in which they are regarded by those who are expected to co-operate with us in promoting their gradual improvement, and thus preparing them for final disenfranchisement.

In a Jamaica newspaper, an advertisement appeared of a female slave having run away from the estate of an unmarried lady. A reward was offered for her apprehension. And there was added as a hint for discov-

\* From every charge of this kind, there must be exempted the “Anti-Slavery Reporter,”—a publication distinguished by the cautious accuracy of its statements, as well as by the soundness of its principles, and the conclusiveness of its reasonings.

ering her, the following clause: "It is strongly suspected that the said slave is harboured by her husband, William Smith." Observe, that by a person in the shape of a woman, and in the station of a landed proprietor, it is accounted and proclaimed as a crime that the female slave should seek for shelter under the roof of her husband, and that he should afford protection to his toil-worn and suffering wife! (*Hear, hear.*) What must be the state of society where such an advertisement could appear, and where such a sentiment could be avowed?\*

To give you some faint conception of what the prevailing ideas of criminal justice are when the slave and the master are both concerned, let me quote the following example. In Jamaica, the premises of a Mr. Edie were burglariously entered by two thieves. He desired his slave Thomas to scare them away with his loaded gun. The slave, obliged to obey his master's orders, took his gun, fired it—in all likelihood at random, it being very dark—and unhappily shot one of the men. For this he was tried. On the evidence of Mr. Edie he was convicted of manslaughter, and his sentence was, that he should be doomed to hard labour in the workhouse for twelve months, and flogged with thirty-nine lashes at going in, and with thirty-nine at coming out! One would have thought that the master alone was the guilty person, because the slave had no alternative but that of doing what he was commanded, or submitting to the ordinary penalty of the cart-whip. And the court that tried the case did consider the owner as much to blame in directing a slave to use a gun in such circumstances; but he was not brought to trial; and they only endeavoured to make *him* suffer by the sentence pronounced upon the slave! The guilty master was indeed punished, but his punishment consisted in the subjection of the innocent slave to a year's hard labour in the workhouse, and to twice thirty-nine stripes with the horrible lacerating scourge! Can any thing be conceived to exceed this as a savage perversion of every rule of justice? What can be looked for in the way of amelioration in a system which leads criminal judges to punish the master by torturing his slave? And is there any remedy for such a state of things but the decisive step of breaking asunder that unholy relationship which makes the one party a mere tool, not only for adding to the gains, but for enduring the stripes that should have followed the guilt, of the other? (*Hear, hear.*)

The next instance I quote illustrates the notions of arbitrary and of lenient punishment which obtain in the slave system. In 1826 the Legislature of Jamaica passed the following enactment:

"§ 37. And in order to restrain arbitrary punishments, be it further enacted, that no slave, on any plantation or settlement, or in any of the workhouses or gaols in this island, shall receive *any more than ten lashes* at one time and for one offence, unless the owner, attorney, guardian, executor, administrator, or overseer, of such plantation or settlement, having such slave in his care, or keeper of such workhouse, or keeper of such

\* How different in this point was the Jewish law, which yet is referred to as a justification of colonial slavery! "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose, in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him."—Deut. xxiii. 15, 16.

gaol shall be present ; and that no such owner, attorney, guardian, executor, administrator, or overseer, workhouse-keeper, or gaol-keeper, shall, on any account, punish a slave with more than *thirty-nine lashes* at one time and for one offence, nor inflict, nor suffer to be inflicted, such last-mentioned punishment, nor any other number of lashes on the same day, nor until the delinquent has recovered from the effect of any former punishment, under a penalty not less than ten pounds, nor more than twenty pounds, for every offence," &c.

Now, observe, Sir, that this enactment is passed in 1826 professedly to *restrain arbitrary punishments*—that it is no better than what was enacted in 1816, and even so far back as 1788—that it gives liberty to the *driver* to inflict at his own discretion *ten lashes* with the cart-whip on any of the negroes whom he superintends, man, woman, or child—that the power of inflicting *thirty-nine lashes* with the same dreadful instrument on any negro of either sex, and of any age, may be exercised by the *owner*, or the *attorney*, or the *guardian*, or the *executor*, or the *administrator*, or the *overseer*, or the *workhouse-keeper*, or the *gaol-keeper*—that all this may be done by any one of these persons without any trial, without the order of any magistrate, without any offence committed, and without any legal responsibility on the part of the individuals to whom such a discretion is entrusted. And this enactment is said to be for the purpose of "*restraining arbitrary punishments*"—it is not only recent, but held out as a step in the progress of mitigation and improvement—and it is brought forward by the West India Committee as a proof of the humanity of the Colonial Legislatures in general, and of the Jamaica Legislature in particular ! It requires no comment of mine to show this meeting that these tender mercies of the Colonial Legislatures are cruel—that such things could not be perpetrated under the form of legislative enactment, or appealed to as evidence of liberality and kindness, were it not that slavery is destructive of all just and kindly feeling towards those who are its victims—and that there is for them, even in the laws which are pretended to have their welfare in view, no security and no comfort whatsoever.

There is nothing, perhaps, which gives a more correct and significant representation of the inherent vice of the system, than the ideas entertained in the West Indies of indulgence or liberality to the slaves. I find that, in a statement of the proceedings of the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts with respect to the Codrington estates in the island of Barbadoes belonging to that Society, it is mentioned as its vindication from the charge of cruelty and severity, that, while the slaves are working in the fields under a vertical sun, they are supplied with draughts of water !—that mothers having three children are to have Saturday afternoon for taking care of them—a privilege boasted of as being given in 1829, though the whole of Saturday was given by an order of the Society to the negroes generally, more than a century before—so wonderful has been the progress of humanity !—and that when a mother has eight children alive—which is but a very rare occurrence—she is permitted to have the whole of Thursday to look after that numerous charge !—If such be held forth as admirable examples of the generosity which is extended to the poor slaves, surely it is a fair inference that their situation is one of inconceivable hardship and suffer-

ing, and that they are regarded as destitute of all title to ordinary consideration and equitable treatment.

The only other fact I shall specify is the horrible case of the Mosses, of which many of you have heard, and which I shall relate in the words of Mr. Huskisson, who was one of the Secretaries of State at the time, and who had occasion to write a despatch upon the very subject, in consequence of a strange application from Governor Grant for a modification of punishment.

“Those facts of the case,” says Mr. H., “which are *proved beyond dispute*, appear to be as follows :

Kate was a domestic slave, and is stated to have been guilty of theft ; she is also accused of disobedience, in refusing to mend her clothes and do her work, and this was the more immediate cause of her punishment. On the 22d of July 1826, she was confined in the stocks, and she was not released till the 8th of August following, being a period of seventeen days. The stocks were so constructed, that she could not sit up and lie down at pleasure, and she remained in them night and day. During this period she was flogged repeatedly, one of the overseers thinks about six times, and red pepper was rubbed upon her eyes to prevent her sleeping. Tasks were given her which, in the opinion of the same overseer, she was incapable of performing ; sometimes because they were beyond her powers, at other times because she could not see to do them on account of the pepper having been rubbed on her eyes : and she was flogged for failing to accomplish these tasks. A violent distemper had been prevalent on the plantation during the summer. It is in evidence, that on one of the days of Kate’s confinement she complained of fever, and that one of the floggings which she received was the day after she had made this complaint. When she was taken out of the stocks she appeared to be cramped, and was then again flogged. The very day of her release she was sent to field labour, (though heretofore a house servant), and on the evening of the third day ensuing, was brought before her owners as being ill and refusing to work, and she then again complained of having had fever. They were of opinion that she had none then, but gave directions to the driver if she should be ill to bring her to them for medicines in the morning. The driver took her to the negro-house, and again flogged her ; though, this time, apparently, without orders from her owners to do so. In the morning, at seven o’clock, she was taken to work in the field, where she died at noon.”

Mr. and Mrs. Moss, who had committed these cruelties, the recital of which makes one’s blood run cold, had a bill of indictment preferred against them for murder, by the Attorney General. This bill was returned “not found” by the grand jury, though the evidence is of such a nature that no jury whatever in this country would have hesitated to bring in a verdict of guilty upon it. But the Attorney General prepared two other bills for misdemeanors—*misdemeanors* !—one against Mr. Moss, and the other against Mr. Moss and his wife. These being found, the case was laid before a petit jury, and after a trial which lasted for sixteen hours, a verdict of guilty was found upon both indictments. And the court sentenced Mr. and Mrs. Moss to imprisonment in the common jail of Nassau, for five calendar months, and Mr. Moss to the payment of a fine of L.300, over and besides the costs of the prosecution. Every man must see that this punishment came far short of what was due to such aggravated and monstrous cruelty. Scarcely any punishment, indeed, that could have been inflicted, was adequate to the enormity of the offence. And had a slave been convicted of one-tenth part of the guilt, the poor wretch would have been torn to pieces with the cart-whip, or consigned to the gallows without ceremony. But in that miserable country, the punish-

ment was accounted a great deal too severe. The two culprits were held in the highest esteem by the most respectable inhabitants of the town and colony. These applied to the governor, General Grant, for a remission of the sentence. They testified to the excellence of the Mosses, and particularly to their humane conduct towards their slaves. They visited them while in the gaol, suffering a short imprisonment for the unheard of barbarity they had practised on a poor helpless female negro. And when these persons of worth and probity at length were liberated in course of law, there was a feast and a jubilee got up on the occasion, at which the inhabitants of the Bahamas celebrated their release, as if they had been martyrs for the cause of righteousness and mercy! (*Hear, hear, hear.*)

You have here, Sir, a very instructive specimen of what is considered a most respectable and humane character among the white inhabitants of the Bahamas. And if this be the case, I may well ask what will be accounted misconduct and cruelty in that quarter. Had the treatment of the poor female slave by her master and mistress stood alone, we might have considered it as an instance of hardheartedness on the part of the Mosses, and nothing more. But you will observe, from the manner in which it was spoken of, and from the attention paid to the perpetrators of it, that it was just an emanation from the slave system, and characteristic of it as a system of incurable evil, fertile in heartless oppression, and crime, and misery.

I might have mentioned other cases, all marked with the same features, and leading to the same conclusion.\* But I shall merely add the view given of the slave by Mr. Dwaris, to satisfy you, that nothing efficient for putting an end to slavery, or for materially lessening its horrors, can be expected short of an act of the legislature, restoring to the slaves their freedom, and placing them, in this respect, on an equality with their white masters. Mr. Dwaris is the only surviving member of a commission appointed to inquire into and report concerning the civil and criminal justice of the West Indies. In his report he uses the following language:—

\* One of the most shocking fruits of the system may be found in the licentiousness of the white masters, and the consequences which immediately result from it. These men have the young females so much under their control and influence, and have so little restraint on their passions, that illicit intercourse with them is notoriously prevalent. This is bad enough; but the mischief assumes a most revolting form, when it is recollected that the children thus procreated are necessarily slaves—that the horrid spectacle is exhibited of a father seeing his own offspring driven to their labour in the field like cattle, and like cattle bought and sold in the market—the price, peradventure, finding its way into his own pocket! To speak of such a thing before a perniculous audience was impossible. But it should sink deep into the heart of every one who feels averse to immediate emancipation. As matters must continue to be, so long as slavery is tolerated, such dismal facts as the one now noticed are unavoidable. No regulation can prevent them, so long as the slave is property. And ought that system which admits of the gross abomination now specified, to be allowed by a Christian people to continue one moment longer? Perish the thought!

More shocking instances even than this might be quoted. What can the reader think of an owner deliberately violating the person of a female slave under age, and of his being acquitted, when tried for the crime, on the ground that the victim of his brutal lust was—*his property?*

“ The poor slave, if left to himself, is generally contented and happy. Possessing a spot to which he is commonly attached, looking to his master for support in health, care in sickness, and advice and help in distress and difficulty, the improvident negro, far from pining in misery, dances and sleeps, trifles and dreams away life, thoughtless, careless, and happily ignorant of his own unprotected condition, and of the impotent fury of the laws. A little more time, and a little less work form the narrow boundary of the wants and wishes of the negro.”

Nothing, I confess, Sir, in the whole history of this melancholy subject, is so deeply affecting and so awfully instructive, as the passage I have now read to you from Mr. Dwarris' report. Here we have in a report which speaks the sentiments of the great body of the West India oppressors,—here we have the slave represented as on a level with the brutes that perish. He is not in a single particular regarded as a human being. It is not once supposed that he has intellectual faculties and moral affections,—that he is responsible to the God that made him—that he has a soul for which, as for ours, the Saviour died, and which, like ours, is destined for immortality. Such a supposition is not even glanced at. He is spoken of as a mere animal, which if left alone, if unheeded by those who are desirous to exalt him to his proper place in the scale of being, and to rescue him from all that is most miserable in this miserable world, will “ dance and sleep, and trifle and dream away life!” Sir, I need not tell the meeting I address, that this is not the original nature of the negro more than it is ours. If it be truly descriptive of him as he is found in the colonies, then let us remember that it is slavery which has made him so,—that it is the native effect of slavery, and the almost acknowledged interest of his owners to keep him down to that degradation,—and that this affords us the most commanding reason of all for going to the government and to the legislature, and saying to them, that in measures of mere amelioration there is no hope for the slave, and that he must be emancipated immediately. (*Loud cheers.*)

But, Sir, I must contradict Mr. Dwarris in one main part of his statement. I cannot admit “ that the slave is thoughtless, careless, and happily ignorant of his own unprotected condition, and of the impotent fury of the laws.” The contrary is the fact. He cannot be ignorant of the existence and severity of the cart-whip,—he cannot be ignorant of the laws, of whose partiality to the master that works and punishes him at his pleasure he has daily and hourly experience,—he cannot be ignorant of the danger and hopelessness of his making any complaint against the evil usage to which he is subjected—and especially, he is not ignorant of the miseries of bondage, and, therefore, not “ thoughtless,” or “ careless,” about regaining the liberty of which he has been deprived. I know, Sir, it has been said over and over by the advocates of slavery, that the slave does not care for liberty, and is well contented without it. But while I would contradict such an assertion on the broad ground of its belying the first principles of human nature, I beg to contradict it on an authority which the slave-holders must not question or deny, because it is their own. When the white people in Jamaica were attacked and endangered by the Maroons, they called in the

aid of their slaves, and to stimulate the exertions of these "thoughtless, careless, ignorant" creatures, they offered them a reward; and what was the reward think you? Will it be believed that they offered them their liberty? (*Cheers*), that very liberty which we are endeavouring to procure for them, but which the planters gravely tell us the slaves neither desire nor value! And the poor slaves, animated by the prospect of the promised manumission, not only gave their exertions by day and their watchings by night in the perilous contest, but hazarded their lives and shed their blood for the protection of their masters (*Hear, hear*).

We are told that the system of slavery should be mitigated, and that a course of amendment should be pursued with a view to its final abolition. It appears to me, Sir, to be as clear as sunshine that no effectual mitigation of slavery is ever to be expected,—that the nature and circumstances of the case forbid such an expectation,—and that whatever may be accomplished in this way will prove a complete delusion;—it will only deceive the abolitionists, and ruin their cause. The men through whose instrumentality, or assistance at least, we can carry on a plan of amelioration with any success, even supposing that our authorities at home should interfere, are the planters themselves and the white people on the spot. Now, what have they done in reality during all the time that they were left to their own legislation and their own will? The subject has been much discussed,—the practical evils of the system have been a thousand times exposed to them in the most convincing and eloquent terms,—they had the sufferings of the slaves before their eyes, appealing to their hearts for redress,—and censure, and remonstrance, and argument have been employed to arouse them to feelings of pity and to plans of reform. And yet every one acquainted with the history of colonial slavery must be satisfied that no attempts worth speaking of were ever made, and that the system has continued in all its despotism, and in all its vileness. Nay, but Parliament has interfered; and, seven years ago, our Government sent out Orders in Council to enforce the doing of what long experience showed there was no willingness to do. And what has been the consequence,—what effect has been produced? Why, Sir, one reason of the meetings that are now taking place throughout the country having been called is, the notorious undeniable fact that the Orders in Council have been disobeyed and contemned. The chartered colonies have done absolutely nothing,—but laughed at our interference, and proclaimed defiance. The crown colonies have done next to nothing. In every essential point they have refused to make any change; and when you examine the particulars in which they have consented, as it were, to do what was suggested or prescribed to them, you find that these amendments were the merest evasions, and that sometimes, under the appearance of improving, they had the real effect of making things worse. There was the case of compulsory manumission, which may be allowed to be a very important measure,—as to that they were quite refractory. They would not hear of it. The Barbadoes legislators hold the following language respecting it: "Compulsory manumission is a direct inversion of the right of property, absolutely destructive of that right, by investing slaves with the power, at their own will, and against the will of their masters, of purchasing their freedom. If this

were once admitted, there would be an end to all security to mortgagees and others ; any attempt at compensation would only prove delusive.” “ Unless, therefore, it is intended to ruin the colonies, and to convert every plantation into a poor-house, the plan of compulsory manumission must be abandoned.” I object, as well as the colonial legislature, to the doctrine of compulsory manumission ; though on very different grounds. I hold it to be quite incompetent for us, on any sound principle, to hedge in a slave to this mode of emancipating himself. You have already done him the wrong of making him a slave : he has an inalienable title to his freedom at this very moment ; you have power to restore him to that freedom by your own deed ; and if expense attend the transaction, the burden of that expense should lie upon you : and yet you would make the slave himself pay it all,—in the additional toils he must undergo,—and by his giving up the fruits and earnings of these toils to his thankless oppressive master. I could say much in condemnation of, —to lift my protest against, the idea of the British Legislature, with its great power, and its high character, saying to the poor, helpless, unprotected slave,—all in kindness to the tyrant who unrighteously possesses him,—“ You may be free, but your freedom must be wrought out by your paying a price for it !” But, Sir, I have adduced the case of manumission as affording a specimen of the temper with which the West India legislators and planters receive those orders which this country sends out, to mitigate the evils of slavery, with a view to its ultimate suppression, even when these orders are, one would think, most considerably heedful of their interests. They are against permitting the slave to labour for his own deliverance ; and if I should say to them, “ there is the value of the slave in sterling money—let him go,” they will not accept of it and give him his freedom. This is their general doctrine, and there is no lack of instances in which they have actually refused manumission even on the terms I have mentioned. Here, Sir, is the secret of their resistance. Your plans of amelioration are an invasion of their rights of property. I beg the meeting to mark this, and to carry it along with them through the whole discussion. The slaves, they say, are their *property*. Once admit this—and so long as slavery is permitted to exist under the sanction of Parliament, you do admit it,—once admit this, and all your arguments for interference are vain, and all your plans for amelioration are fruitless. The whole question may be said to hang upon this point. If the slaves are not property, then slavery is at an end. The slave-holders see this most clearly ; they see that while you allow these slaves to be their *property*, you act inconsistently and oppressively in intermeddling, as you propose to do, with what is theirs as much as any other of their goods and chattels : you must proceed, therefore, in your measures for amelioration, as you call it, with “ hesitating steps and slow ;” and there is nothing you can do for restraining punishment, for regulating labour, for enforcing manumission, for introducing education and Christianity, which will not be met with the remonstrance, undeniably just by your own concessions, that you are encroaching on the sacred rights of property,—the slave-holders see all this, and they can employ it to paralyse and defeat all your efforts to get at emancipation, and to pre-

pare for it. It is on this account, that I wish it settled in your minds, as a fixed and immutable principle, that there is and can be no property of man in man. Adopt this principle, and give it that ascendancy over your minds to which it is entitled;—and slavery is swept away.

I do not deny, Sir, notwithstanding what I have now said, that the evils of practical slavery may be lessened. By parliamentary enactments, by colonial arrangements, by appeals to the judgment and feelings of planters, and by various other means, a certain degree of melioration *may* be secured. But I say, in the *first* place, that, with all that you can accomplish, or reasonably expect, of mitigation, you cannot alter the nature of slavery itself. With every improvement you have superinduced upon it, you have not made it less debasing, less cruel, less destructive in its essential character. The black man is still the *property* of the white man. And that one circumstance not only implies in it the transgression of inalienable right and everlasting justice, but is the fruitful and necessary source of numberless mischiefs, the very thought of which harrows up the soul, and the infliction of which no superintendence of any government can either prevent or control. Mitigate and keep down the evil as much as you can, still it is there in all its native virulence, and still it will do its malignant work in spite of you. The improvements you have made are merely superficial. You have not reached the seat and vital spring of the mischief. You have only concealed in some measure, and for a time, its inherent enormity. Its essence remains unchanged and untouched, and is ready to unfold itself whenever a convenient season arrives, notwithstanding all your precaution, and all your vigilance, in those manifold acts of injustice and inhumanity, which are its genuine and its invariable fruits. You may white-wash the sepulchre,—you may put upon it every adornment that fancy can suggest,—you may cover it over with all the flowers and evergreens that the garden or the fields can furnish, so that it will appear beautiful outwardly unto men. But it is a sepulchre still,—full of dead men's bones and of all uncleanness (*Great cheering*). Disguise slavery as you will,—put into the cup all the pleasing and palatable ingredients which you can discover in the wide range of nature and of art,—still it is a bitter, bitter, bitter draught, from which the understanding and the heart of every man, in whom nature works unsophisticated and unbiassed, recoils with unutterable aversion and abhorrence (*Immense cheering*). Why, Sir, slavery is the very Upas tree of the moral world, beneath whose pestiferous shade all intellect languishes, and all virtue dies. (*Reiterated cheering*). And if you would get quit of the evil, you must go more thoroughly and effectually to work than you can ever do by any or by all of those palliatives, which are included under the term “mitigation.” The foul sepulchre must be taken away. The cup of oppression must be dashed to pieces on the ground. The pestiferous tree must be cut down and eradicated; it must be, root and branch of it, cast into the consuming fire, and its ashes scattered to the four winds of heaven. (*Loud and long continued cheering*). It is thus that you must deal with slavery. You must annihilate it,—annihilate it now,—and annihilate it for ever.

Get your mitigation. I say in the *second* place, that you are thereby,

in all probability further away than ever from your object. It is not to the Government or the Parliament at home that you are to look—neither is it to the legislatures and planters abroad that you are to look—for accomplishing the abolition of negro slavery. Sad experience shows that, if left to themselves, they will do nothing efficient in this great cause. It is to the sentiments of the people at large that you are to look, to the spread of intellectual light, to the prevalence of moral feeling, to the progress, in short, of public opinion, which, when resting on right principles and moving in a right direction, must in this free and Christian country prove irresistible. (*Great applause*). But observe, Sir, the public mind will not be sufficiently affected by the statement of abstract truths, however just, or by reasonings on the tendencies of a system, however accurate. It must be more or less influenced by what is visible, or by what is easily known and understood of the actual atrocities which accompany slavery, wherever it is left to its own proper operation. Let it be seen in its native vileness and cruelty, as exhibited when not interfered with by the hand of authority, and it excites universal and unqualified detestation. But let its harsher asperities be rubbed off; take away the more prominent parts of its iniquity; see that it look somewhat smoother and milder than it did before; make such regulations as ought, if faithfully executed, to check its grosser acts of injustice and oppression; give it the appearance of its being put under the humanizing sway of religious education and instruction; do all this and you produce one effect at least,—you modify the indignation of a great number of the community; you render slavery much less obnoxious; you enable its advocates and supporters to say in reply to our denunciations of its wickedness, “O, the slaves are now comfortable and happy; they do not suffer what they did; they are protected and well treated,” and in proof of all this, they point to what are called “mitigations.” But mark me, Sir; under these mitigations, slavery still exists, ready at every convenient season to break forth in all its countless forms of inhumanity; meanwhile the public feeling in a great measure subsides; And when the public feeling—such an important and indispensable element in our attempts to procure abolition—is allowed to subside, tell me, Sir, when, and where, and by what means it is again to be roused into activity. (*Hear, hear, hear.*) I must say, for one, that though I sympathize with my sable brethren, when I hear of them being spared even one lash of the cart-whip; yet when I take a more enlarged view of their condition—when I consider the nature of that system under which they are placed, and when I look forward to their deliverance, and the means by which alone it is to be effected, I am tempted, and almost if not altogether persuaded, to deprecate that insidious thing termed “mitigation,” because it directly tends to perpetuate the mighty evil, which will by and by throw off the improvements by which it is glossed over as quite unnatural to it, will ultimately grow up again into all its former dreadfulness, and continue to wither and crush beneath it, all that is excellent and glorious in man. (*Great cheering*).

In the *third* place, by insisting on your plan of mitigation, you furnish the slave-holders with a weapon by which they will defeat the

cause of abolition. They will resist all interference on your part with their alleged *property*, as long as they can; but when they see you bent and determined on introducing improvements, with a view to ultimate emancipation, and as necessary for bringing it about, they will so far acquiesce and yield as to suit their own purpose—which is to disappoint your hopes. They will gratify you with one change this year, and with another change the next year: they will pretend to adopt this amendment, and to repress that abuse; they will present to you a surface less ugly and revolting than what you had been accustomed to see. But then the slaves are still their *property*—remember that—and they have numberless methods and opportunities of oppressing, grinding, tormenting these poor miserable beings. There will still be pangs and sorrows which wring their hearts in secret—there will be groans and sighs which can only ascend to heaven—and we rejoice to think that the ear of Deity is ever open to their cry. But *you* can never hear these groans—you can never know of these pangs. Slavery continues to reign. The preparation for its abolition seemed to be going on. And yet the upholders of this incurable system, as I must pronounce it to be, have been merely amusing and deceiving you. You have taught them—you have encouraged them to do so. They have removed some things that offended you—they have supplied other things that you said were wanting. In one word, they have “*mitigated*.” But examine the matter closely, and it will be discovered that those whom you necessarily trusted for carrying on the reform of the system, had been systematically evading every proposal that would trench on the essentials of their system—they had been all along deluding you with what had the semblance, but none of the reality of improvement—and you will discover when it is too late that slavery remains dominant in all its worst principles and most debasing influences—that your preparatory scheme had failed in every material particular—that emancipation on that ground is as far from your reach as it was a century ago. Of all this you have a strong proof in the treatment given to the Orders in Council. These have been withstood—evaded—frustrated—moderate and indulgent as they were. The planters got the advice from some of their correspondents in this country, to do something to please the abolitionists. And in certain instances they have followed it. But we speak truly when we say, that the Orders in Council have not been obeyed in their spirit and intent. And, be assured, they will not be obeyed in that sense. It is impossible to enforce them—hearty co-operation is necessary to this, and such co-operation you can never get from the slave-holders. They can render inefficient every measure you may devise for their adoption; and *they have actually done so for seven long years.* (*Hear, hear.*) Above all, they have opposed the introduction of Christianity among the slaves, without which the friends of gradual abolition allow and maintain the slaves cannot be properly prepared for freedom, and without which, they admit, that all other mitigations are of little use in consequence. This they have opposed with their whole might—and this, be assured, Sir, they will continue to oppose—and to this, from the very nature of religious instruction, and of the means for promoting it, their opposition will be successful.

And here, Sir, I must be permitted to say a little on the argument

for slavery drawn from the holy Scriptures. (*Hear, hear.*) I never could see that there were any of those difficulties on this subject, which have weighed with some of my worthy Christian friends. Two years ago I published my sentiments on the point, and at the same time advocated, what I am supporting this day, the cause of immediate abolition. And the longer that I have reflected on the question, the more fully am I satisfied that the views which I then expressed are sound. Our opponents say, *first*, that slavery was permitted in the Old Testament; and, *secondly*, that it is not forbidden in the New.

Now, Sir, I shall not stop to point out the difference that subsists between slavery in our colonies, and slavery among the ancient Jews.\* I will grant that slavery was permitted under the Old Testament dispensation. But what then? The permission was given by Him who is the great proprietor of all, to answer his own especial purposes in the management of that peculiar people, among whom the practice was allowed to prevail. He might do the same thing just now, if it seemed good in his sight. But has he done so? Can the slave-holders produce any warrant for making property of their black brethren, and reducing them to the condition of slaves? If they have any warrant, let them show it, and we will bow submissively to the will of heaven. Show me a case where a man, under the Jewish Theocracy, stole his neighbour and kept him as his property, without the sanction of the Almighty, and yet was approved of in this by the Almighty, and so far as this part of the argument goes, I contend no more. On any such case, however, I defy the most learned of our antagonists to condescend. And if slavery obtained in consequence of a divine appointment, or a divine permission, we can no more justify our maintaining slavery, when we can plead no such appointment and no such permission, than we could justify ourselves for sending forth an army to destroy the inhabitants of any country on the continent, who had not made war against us, merely because the Israelites—under the authority of God—went forth to slay and to exterminate the Canaanites. This appears to me quite sufficient to set aside the argument deduced from the Old Testament. When our opponents have recourse to the existence of slavery among the Jews, they must allow us to have recourse also to the reasons for it that are assigned in the divine record, which they so triumphantly refer to.

As to the New Testament, I here concede, not that slavery is not forbidden—but that it is not forbidden expressly or *totidem verbis*. Still this is nothing to the purpose. It is just in conformity to the wise and prudent mode which the first teachers of our religion followed, under divine direction, in preaching the gospel. They did not denounce every iniquitous practice that prevailed in their day, and rebuke those who were addicted to it. They did not intermeddle with existing institutions by name, point out their errors, command them to be abolished, and prescribe what should be substituted in their place. They were divinely taught to avoid this, which would have stirred up immediate opposition

\* See Godwin's "Lectures on British Colonial Slavery," p. 108, for some excellent remarks on the topic. The volume is earnestly recommended to general perusal and attention, as affording correct information, and inculcating sound views.

to Christianity, and given its enemies a handle for representing it as hostile to the obligations of civil life and political government. Their general plan was to proclaim such doctrines and to inculcate such precepts as, when believed and obeyed, would bring every species of injustice and wickedness to a speedy termination. Of this I can produce many examples. Did the Apostle Paul attack Nero, the great oppressor and man-slayer of his day? No; but he taught a religion which exposed Nero's tyranny to merited abhorrence, and which, if Nero had embraced it, would have put an end to his crimes. Did Paul tell husbands that they should not keep their wives as slaves, which these really were? No; but he gave them such lessons as plainly condemned that tyranny, and instructed them to treat their wives as companions, with tenderness and love. Did he take notice of and prohibit the horrible custom, at once legal and prevalent, of parents putting to death their sickly and deformed children; of their scourging and even killing their offspring at their pleasure, and without there being any appeal against their barbarity; of their selling their sons, which they were empowered to do three times, whereas they could only sell a slave once? No; but he laid such injunctions on parents as distinctly and forcibly demonstrated those things to be contrary to the will of heaven, and enforced a conduct towards their children with which all such treatment was at irreconcilable variance. This was the way in which the appointed promulgators of the gospel proscribed and interdicted those practices I have adverted to: and in the same way it proscribes and interdicts slavery. Its preachers did not say to slave-holders or to legislators, "you must immediately set all slaves at liberty!" But they said what was tantamount to this, and what could not but be received as a communication from the great Ruler of the world, without producing that effect. It is said in the New Testament, as it had been said in the Old, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,"—every man being there affirmed to be our neighbour; and if we love our neighbours as ourselves, can we keep them slaves? It is said, "Do unto others as you would that others should do to you;" and do we follow this golden rule, or do we not despise it, when we make others slaves? It is said over and over again, that all men are our brethren: and is it a token of brotherly affection—is it not a contempt of the very phrase, when we retain any one, who is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, in the condition of a slave? And, to quote no more, look at the injunction, which the apostle Paul lays upon those who were in possession of slaves, and upon all who stand in the relation of masters. "Masters," says he, "give unto your servants that which is just and equal;"—"forbearing threatening; knowing that your master also is in heaven; neither is there any respect of persons in him." And if masters give that which is just and equal to their servants, will they not first of all give them their freedom?—especially when an appeal is made, in the way of motive, to him who is the sovereign Lord of both, and who has no respect of persons. And then, Sir, what are the doctrines of Christianity? The first and fundamental doctrine is, that we are all on a level in the sight of God, whether we are black or white in the complexion, whether we are masters or slaves—all on a level in our sinfulness and liability to perdition—all

on a level in our absolute need of the grace which is revealed in the gospel—all on a level as to the interposition of Jesus Christ, who died upon a cross, that he might be for salvation to the ends of the earth—all on a level as to the faith we must cherish, and the hopes we may entertain, and the character we are to cultivate, with a view to heaven—all on a level as to the whole of that dispensation of mercy which has been established by the Redeemer, in whom, we are expressly told, there is “neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all and in all.” And can we ever dream of the lawfulness or the sinlessness of making that man our slave, or of retaining him in slavery—buying and selling and treating him as a beast of burden—for whose soul, eye, and body too—both are redeemed by the gospel—Christ shed his infinitely precious blood, and who is entitled to look forward with ourselves, privileged as we are, to the blessedness of an eternal world? Does not the whole spirit and genius of Christianity—do not all its truths, and precepts, and prospects, frown upon slavery as a system of rebellion against God, and as one of those very fabrics of evil, which it was intended to overthrow? I might easily have enlarged on this view. But I flatter myself I have said enough to show that those who take shelter under Christianity, as if that afforded any countenance to the slave system, are either ignorant or regardless of that revelation of divine mercy—that when they appeal to the Scriptures as sanctioning what they are so unwilling to renounce, they do nothing less than put a blasphemous commentary on the contents of that sacred volume. (*Cheers.*) And it is worth mentioning, that the subject was practically viewed in that light by many eminent persons in the earlier ages of the church. For instance, Constantine exercised his authority in facilitating the manumission of slaves—allowing the ceremony to be performed on the Lord’s day, because he considered it a religious or Christian act. Gregory the Great emancipated his own slaves, and encouraged others to do the same, on the principle that our Redeemer took upon him our flesh, in order to deliver us from the bondage of sin, and that, therefore, we should give back freedom to those whom the law of nations had deprived of it. Many bishops did the same thing, on the same or on similar grounds. They did this, not under the gradual influence of the gospel, but from the knowledge and conviction, that it is directly hostile to slavery, and that its true and enlightened votaries cannot consistently hold human beings in bondage.

But the planters and Colonial Legislatures oppose with all their might the spread of Christianity among the slave population. Of this fact there cannot be a doubt in any mind that has attended to the subject, and it is in vain for the advocates of slavery to deny it. I must not be told of insulated cases of good men among the planters allowing, or even encouraging ministers of religion to preach to the negroes. I must not be told of such persons as the Rev. Mr. Bridges occasionally baptizing great numbers of them, as if the waters of baptism were equivalent to instruction in the doctrines and duties and consolations of Christianity. I must not be told of persons from our own country being called, and having churches built for them, that they may dispense the ordinances of religion. All this may be done—all this has been done—and yet the

good effected can scarcely be estimated, so inconsiderable is it. But we have various broad and unquestionable facts, demonstrative of my statement, that to the diffusion of Christian truth among the slaves, their masters are invincibly repugnant. Need I remind you, in proof of this, of the case of Mr. Harte in Barbadoes, a rector in the English church there, who, in dispensing the Lord's supper, an ordinance in which all his disciples are equally entitled and called upon to remember the dying love of Jesus—administered it to some people of colour, kneeling at the same altar with white people, though a space intervened between them, and had also preached the doctrine of redemption by the blood of Christ to all, whether bond or free; and on that account was denounced by a meeting of the Vestry of St. Lucy, in a series of resolutions passed and published, as if he had thereby undermined the very foundations of West India society? \* Need I recall to your recollection the persecution of the Missionary Smith unto death, and of various other Missionaries of unimpeachable characters, for their zeal and fidelity in preaching the gospel of salvation to the slaves? Need I tell you of the destruction of places of worship by mobs, consisting not of the rabble, but of the better classes of the whites, who afford a specimen of the influence which in that unhappy quarter is actually brought to bear against our attempts to evangelize their bondsmen? Need I speak of their habitual, total, and legalized desecration of the Sabbath day, which the slaves are compelled to make their own working-day and marketing-day, in bold defiance of that divine commandment which says, "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," and without whose sacred rest, the religion of the Bible can make no progress and obtain no footing? Need I speak of the enactment by which it is ordered that no place of worship shall be open,—no meeting for that purpose held, before sun-rise or after sun-set,—they who made the enactment being well

\* The following are some of the resolutions passed on the occasion alluded to—Sir R. A. Alleyne in the chair; and they furnish unequivocal proof of what is contended for, viz. that the whites will not agree to the introduction of Christianity in its genuine spirit and entire form, because they conceive it subversive of slavery; and that ministers who are brave enough to declare the message from God, and to do his work faithfully, must lay their account with obloquy, resistance, and persecution.

"Resolved 2d, That in all communities, distinctions of rank are necessary to the safety and wellbeing of society, and more especially in such a one as ours, where the hand of nature has drawn a mark of distinction between the proprietor of the soil, and its dependents. 3d, That any attempts proceeding from the ministers of religion to destroy these distinctions, to amalgamate and level the two classes of our country, must tend to endanger the safety and property of the white inhabitants, and cannot be otherwise than injurious to the civil condition, and religious improvement of the black population, by exciting in their minds discontent, and views inconsistent with their situation, and in the proprietors a just jealousy of those who are appointed to the office of the religious instruction of the slaves. 4th, That it is with deep concern that the inhabitants of this parish, have observed the frequent attempts made by the rector of the parish, to destroy the distinctions which they deem so necessary to their safety, more especially evinced by his offensive sermon on Easter Sunday, and his disgraceful conduct while administering the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, thereby endeavouring to alienate the slaves from a sense of their duty, by inculcating doctrines of equality inconsistent with their obedience to their masters, and the policy of this island."

aware that in this case, most of the slaves, having to toil from sun-rise to sun-set, would be unable to attend, and thus debarred from the means of improvement? And need I state, that notwithstanding all that has been said, and recommended, and enjoined upon this important subject, yet neither in the crown, nor in the chartered colonies, has any legal provision been made for securing to the slaves the essential benefits of education and Christian instruction? \*

And, Sir, I do not wonder at all this. For, in the *first* place, the slave-holders and their legislators know as well as we do, that Christianity is utterly inimical to slavery, which at all rates they are determined to uphold. They are ignorant, I dare say, but not so ignorant as not to see that if the slave population were all imbued with the spirit of the gospel, they would, with one great simultaneous movement, cast off the bonds which oppress them, and assert that liberty which the same gospel would teach them to "use as not abusing it:" For the spirit of the gospel is a spirit of liberty, not in any one department, but in all departments of human life: it is a general, pervading principle, repulsive to bondage of whatsoever kind. "Whom the Son of God hath made free, he is free indeed."—(*Cheers.*) For this reason they will resist all your endeavours to give a free circulation to religious truth, and a free ingress to Christian ministers, in the colonies and among the slaves. They may admit those teachers who will dwell chiefly on mere outward forms; who will be more ready to inculcate passive obedience, than justice and humanity; who will refrain from checking the tyranny and licentiousness of the masters; who will never take part with the slave when he is consigned to unmerited punishment; and who will be found on every occasion to advocate the cause of the planters, and the continuance of slavery. But they will not, they cannot, they dare not, admit those men who will be bold enough to declare the whole counsel of God, and under the sanction and by the help of revelation, pursue it as one of their objects to put down, or even to mitigate, "one of the greatest evils that ever afflicted or disgraced humanity."

In the *second* place, they look on slaves as their property, in some degree, as they look on dogs and horses as their property; and so long as this is the case, it is impossible that they should be anxious for cultivating their minds, and imparting to them religious and moral instruction. And as a proof that this is the light in which the slaves are regarded by them, I beg to quote from this Edinburgh newspaper, of October 9, 1830, in which two estates in the West Indies (island of Tobago), are advertised for sale; the sale to take place on the 9th day of March next, in the Royal Exchange Coffee-rooms, Edinburgh. On one of these estates there are said to be "upwards of 100 negroes, 16 mules, 17 working oxen, 28 pasture cattle, besides sheep." And on the other,

\* An advocate for slavery thus writes in a Jamaica Courant of July last,—and his language may be considered as expressing the sentiments of the great body of those whose cause he has espoused: "If any gentleman wishes to convert the heathen, or to teach them to read and write, let him first free them out of his own pocket, and then he may make a kirk and a mill of them. But for a recorder, attorney, or overseer to educate the slaves under their management, before the proprietor is remunerated, is downright robbery or madness."

there are said to be “upwards of 120 negroes, 10 mules, 18 oxen, 18 cows, besides sheep and *other stock!*” Can any thing be more conclusive than this very fact, of the degraded light in which the slaves are considered by their owners, and of the unblushing effrontery with which these will avow their doctrine on that subject. Here, in the 19th century, when men’s rights are so well ascertained and so liberally acknowledged—in the metropolis of the land of Bibles, of enlightened and Christian Scotland—in the very place where we have assembled to petition for the emancipation of slaves—we are insulted with an advertisement, telling us that, in our own public market, hundreds of human beings are to be exposed to sale, and classing them with mules, oxen, cows, sheep, and *other stock!* (*Cheers.*) And when they have courage for this, can we suppose that they will care for giving the slaves religious instruction? Aye, just as they will care for giving it to the oxen and the mules, with whom the slaves are put on a footing of equality! To give religious instruction to beings whom they have reduced to such a level, and of whom they speak with such contempt, would be preposterous and absurd; yes, and it would be dangerous too, for it would be to employ the means of unfitting them for being any longer *property*, and of subtracting them ere long from their “*other stock.*” I sincerely hope, and I am certain, if we do what we ought to do, that, by the 19th of March next, when the horrible “roup” is to take place, the West India estates will be of little value, so far as the negroes are concerned in the transaction. (*Cheers.*)

In short, Sir, it is not to be expected, it is contrary to all the probabilities of the case, it is a moral impossibility, that religious instruction should be suffered to spread among the slaves; and if religious instruction does not prevail, and produce its proper effects, it seems to be agreed on all hands, that no substantial amelioration can be accomplished, and then it follows, of course, that the whole scheme of gradual abolition falls to the ground. To look for it, or to seek for it, in such circumstances, is about as wise as the conduct of the simpleton, who was seen standing long on the brink of a mighty stream, and on being asked why he stood there so long, replied, that he was waiting till the river had run by.—(*Cheers and laughter.*)

I have no doubt that it will be said; Why will you not trust the Parliament and the Government, that they will abolish slavery “at the earliest practicable period?” I answer, that I can place no confidence either in the Parliament or the Government, though I have much respect for both, in some points;—my confidence rests on the public feeling of Great Britain and Ireland.—(*Cheers.*) I freely and frankly declare it. I have had proofs of the growing attachment of the people to our cause; but I have had sore and melancholy experience of the indifference of the other two bodies,—instead of advancing, they have been retrograding.—(*Cheers.*) I will give you some reasons why I cannot trust them, or anticipate any thing from them, unless there be a strong constitutional pressure upon them from without, and unless the united voice of the empire is raised in favour of immediate emancipation.

In 1823, Mr. Buxton, a distinguished philanthropist, and an ardent friend to the cause of abolition,—though a *gradualist*, for which I do

not much like him, (*laugh*), brought forward a motion in the House of Commons to the following effect:—"That the state of slavery is repugnant to the principles of the British constitution and the Christian religion, and that it ought to be gradually abolished throughout the British dominions, with as much expedition as may be consistent with a due regard to the wellbeing of the parties concerned." Nothing could be more moderate than this,—it would have suited our friends whose resolutions and petition were rejected by you at our last meeting,—it was such as the most cautious and temperate of emancipationists might have acquiesced in, even without any serious opposition from a slave-holder. And yet its fate in the House of Commons was that of being refused and quashed. It did not please the Commons, though, in my view of the subject, it was a very inadequate proposal; and it was superseded by the following resolutions,—still more milk-and-water than Mr. Buxton's motion,—which Mr. Canning moved, and which were unanimously adopted.

"1st, That it is expedient to adopt effectual and decisive measures for meliorating the condition of the slave population in his Majesty's dominions.

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

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

"4th, That these resolutions be laid before his Majesty."

And in speaking in support of these resolutions, the Right Hon. Gentleman who moved them, took occasion, if I recollect right, to deny the contrariety which was alleged to subsist between either the British constitution or the Christian religion, and colonial slavery. And in all his discussions, though he sometimes spoke strongly against it, yet he expressed himself so much in the spirit of compromise, and with such excessive caution, as to convey the impression, that the administration which he guided were not hearty in the cause of abolition, and had no proper and deep-rooted convictions of its necessity.

Then, again, what happened in July this very year? Mr. Canning's resolution had been followed by Orders in Council, recommending or prescribing certain changes in the treatment of slaves, which I shall not now enumerate or consider. But seven years had elapsed, and the mitigation and improvement thereby contemplated had never taken place. The most important of them had been peremptorily refused. The language of insult and rebellion had been used in the colonies towards the authorities in Great Britain. And so far as any thing had been done in apparent compliance with the Orders, it was found to be evasive, trifling, or nugatory. Well, at the close of the last session, Mr. Brougham, in one of the most powerful speeches ever delivered within the walls of the House of Commons, brought forward a motion,

“pledging the House to proceed at the earliest practicable period in the next session, to take into its serious consideration the mitigation and final abolition of slavery, together with the amendment of the administration of justice in the slave colonies of Great Britain.” Could you have believed it possible that the House of Commons would negative such a motion as this? Had Mr. Brougham gone a great deal farther in his demands, might it not have been expected, that after the contempt and obstinacy manifested by the colonies, for seven long years, even these larger demands would have been acceded to without hesitation? And yet our worthy representatives rejected Mr. Brougham’s motion by a large majority! Does this afford any reason for our reposing confidence in Parliament? And now observe the sentiments which Government expressed in the course of the debate. In reply to the irresistible argument and matchless eloquence of Mr. Brougham, Sir R. Peel “urged various objections to the expediency of giving the prospective pledge proposed by that honourable Member. He objected to it, among other reasons, because it pledged the House to the final abolition of slavery, whereas, he was not prepared to give any such pledge, until he saw the means of effecting it. It did so too, without adverting to compensation. He admitted he could not defend the title by which slaves were held as property, but still he thought the present holders of them had the same just claim to compensation with the holders of any other kind of property. He cautioned the House against pledging itself to any measure leading to emancipation. He admitted the power of Parliament to impose laws on the colonies, but he could not contemplate, without horror, an idea of going to war with them to enforce such laws. He viewed the atrocities practised towards the slaves with deep regret, especially as he could not view them merely as if they were the acts of individuals, but as indicating that the sympathies of the colonists generally were enlisted on the side of the wrong-doer and against the slave. While he admitted, in the fullest extent, the right of Parliament to legislate for the colonies on this question, yet he should rather let the necessary measures originate in the kindly feelings of the colonists themselves, for he thought little good could be expected from reluctant legislation.”

Sir, one cannot help feeling surprise and indignation at such conduct on the part of his majesty’s ministers. I shall not stop to point out the contradictions and absurdities which occur in the Right Honourable Secretary’s remarks. But look, I pray you, to what he announces as his opinion in July last on the subject of final abolition. He was pledged to that object by the Resolutions of 1823. And yet, with the utmost coolness, he comes forward, in 1830, and declares, in the face of that Christian country whose affairs he is employed to assist in administering, that he cannot agree to Mr. Brougham’s motion, for this among other reasons, that it pledges the House to the very thing to which he and the House were pledged seven years before; he cautions the House against entering into any such measure, leading to such a result; and he uses his ministerial influence to prevail upon the House to acquiesce in and support his tergiversation! Thus the Government are going back in this question,—there is just the more urgent necessity for our

going forward, and forward we shall go (*Loud cheers*). It now appears that the administration have not made up their minds as to the propriety or duty of rescuing, at any future time, or in any circumstances, 800,000 of their fellow-subjects from the most detestable bondage. They have even broken their promise,—they have resiled from the assurance they long ago gave us, on this simple, though essential, point. And yet we are exhorted to place reliance upon them as if they would not deceive us, and to petition for nothing more than *gradual* emancipation! Let us petition for *gradual* emancipation, say the advocates for that plan; for we cannot expect to get any thing more: *immediate* emancipation will not be granted. Why, Sir, if we complaisantly put our case into the hands of Ministers, it appears from the language of Sir R. Peel, that we shall get neither the one nor the other. But, Sir, it is not what we may succeed in obtaining, that should regulate the nature and extent of our request. It becomes us to ask what it is morally right for us to have. That is the measure of our obligation, whatever be the consequence of our petitioning. It is our duty to knock, and never to cease knocking, at the doors of the Parliament and of the Ministry till we prevail upon them,—till we compel them, by constitutional means,—don't let me be misunderstood,—by constitutional means,—to grant what we demand, and what we deem absolutely necessary on the grounds of religion, justice, humanity, and every thing that is most dear and precious in the estimation of man,—I mean the immediate and total abolition of colonial slavery. (*Loud cheers.*)

As another reason for distrusting His Majesty's Government upon this vital question, I refer to the case of the Mauritius. A protecting duty had been laid on the sugar of the East, evidently for the benefit of the West India planters. But then the Mauritius produced sugar by means of *slave* labour. It was proposed to relieve the Mauritius, thus situated, from the protecting duty, and continue to levy it on India. Remonstrances against this were strongly urged; but in vain. The Parliament and the Ministry, as if from an instinctive partiality to the produce of the labour and the blood of slaves, carried the measure into effect, and, in respect of the protecting duty, put the Mauritius on a footing with the colonies which are cultivated by slaves, and discouraged the cultivation in those parts only where it is carried on by freemen! This fact by itself might evince that the Legislature and the Government are heterodox on the question of abolition altogether,—that they are unworthy of any thing like implicit confidence in the matter,—that they must be instructed and addressed by their constituents and by the people, in a tone which they will feel it difficult or impossible to disregard.

I have still another proof to mention, of the little dependence that is to be placed on Government in this great cause, unless they shall be carefully watched, and vigorously urged by the people. Every one of us, *gradualists* and *immediatists*, allow the necessity of giving moral and religious tuition to the slaves. The *immediatists* insist upon it as a boon which should be given to them at any time and in any circumstances, though they also maintain that it is not necessary before emancipation, and that it can only be effectually imparted after emancipation is accomplished. And the *gradualists*, having it as their leading argument, that

moral and religious training is an indispensable preliminary to emancipation, are zealous that this should be realized without delay, in any measures that may be adopted, with a view to the object which we all profess to be pursuing. Nay, in the catalogue of those reforms which were proposed by the Orders in Council, this very thing stood first and foremost—which was very imposing to Christian men. But we all know that nothing was done. And no wonder; for the Government don't seem to be sincere on the subject. Why, Sir, they have abandoned this point, so far as they are concerned, and appear to have left it to the discretion of the planters and Colonial Assemblies, from a persuasion—is it so?—that their Christian principles and feelings will lead them to do that for which any compulsory measure would be unavailing! Sir George Murray, indeed, who was secretary for the Colonial Department, in his letter, two years ago, to the governors of chartered colonies, did very forcibly urge upon them the duty of making provision by law for the objects alluded to. But then in the Order of Council, dated in February last, there is a new consolidated slave code for the crown colonies, which is also held out as a model on which the chartered colonies are to legislate; and yet *in that code there is not a single provision as to the means of education and religious instruction for the slaves!* Here the most momentous and essential of all the means of mitigating the evils of slavery, and preparing the slaves for emancipation, is deliberately and studiously omitted in the very document in which it ought to have been found; and as such a thing was proposed by our Government a year and a half before, we are again compelled to conclude that they are not merely vacillating but retreating, and that therefore they are unworthy of that reliance which we are expected to place upon their earnestness or their sincerity in the cause even of final abolition.

And, Sir, would you know the secret of such proceedings as those to which I have now adverted? It is this—I must not blink it, and nobody who is acquainted with these matters can deny it—the West India interest is too strong for ministers to contend against in the House of Commons. This interest can command from 60 to 80 votes in that House, (*Hear, hear,*) no trifling matter, it must be admitted, in the eyes of those who have not lately been able to carry their measures by very triumphant majorities, and who, if they are desirous to succeed by the help of the anti-abolition members, must naturally give a *quid pro quo*. Whatever the *quo* may have been, we see what the *quid* is—a refusal to give a pledge even for ultimate emancipation, or to adopt any plans, even on the principle of *gradualism*, that any one above the rank of a changeling can consider to be efficient. The West India interest, during the late elections, have made inconceivable exertions to augment and strengthen their power in Parliament. How far they have been successful in their attempts I cannot pretend to say. But one thing is clear; the greater their zeal is to uphold slavery, the greater ought to be ours to bring it to an immediate and “perpetual end.” And still more ought we to be upon our guard, and still more ought we to bestir ourselves, from the circumstances I am about to mention. It is communicated in a letter from my friend Mr. Brougham to Mr. Pringle,\* which, in the

\* The excellent Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, London, who happened to be in Edinburgh at the time the meeting referred to was held.

bustle that took place, was neglected to be read to you at last meeting. Mr. Brougham, after regretting his inability to attend the meeting to which he had been invited, intimates as certain, that two measures are in progress—one a parliamentary enactment, the other an executive arrangement—most interesting to the slave population, and requiring upon our part the most vigilant attention, not to say strenuous opposition. The former is the bill for facilitating the removal of negroes from settlement to settlement, which is at present a capital offence; the latter is the admission of the planters and others, in certain of the Crown Colonies, to have a share in the government thereof. These plans, coupled with the declarations of Sir Robert Peel, at the close of last session, to which I have already alluded, demand the utmost exertion, on the part of the abolitionists. And it is one object of Mr. Brougham's letter to call upon all the opponents of slavery, whether members of Parliament or others, to be early at their post, and to be constant and jealous in their attentions to the proceedings of government.

I conclude this part of my argument by remarking, that if we confide in parliament and his Majesty's ministers for the abolition of slavery at all, or even for those measures which are thought by the *gradualists* to be requisite as preliminaries to it, we shall act contrary to the experience we have had of their views and principles, and shall be guilty of disbelieving the votes they have come to, and the declarations they have made, in the face of the country whose people they represent, or whose affairs they administer. The things that they have done, and the things that they have failed to do, equally afford, I scruple not to say, ample demonstration that they are unsound upon the whole question at issue, and that they must be taught, urged, and constitutionally constrained to emancipate the slaves, by the people at large, who are as well qualified to judge of this subject—a subject of the plainest Christian and moral principle—as any statesman can be, within the limits of the three kingdoms.

It is impossible for me, Sir, to reply to all the attacks that have been made upon me in certain newspapers, since I publicly advocated the cause of immediate abolition. Some of these I disdain to answer. (*Cheers.*) They are obviously dictated by personal malice; I know them to be so; and I will not condescend to notice such contemptible abuse—such unworthy antagonists. (*Continued cheers.*) But wherever I find a grave argument, I am ready to meet it; and here I have something like argument in a letter (printed in some of the journals) from my friend Mr. Combe, which he honourably acknowledges by putting his name to it. Permit me, Sir, to offer a few remarks on what Mr. Combe has printed to influence his fellow-citizens in behalf of *gradual* emancipation.

Mr. Combe acknowledges that we are right in the abstract principle for which we contend, but wrong in insisting on its application to the present case. His doctrine of abstract principle is one to which, so far as I understand it, I cannot in conscience subscribe. What he calls an abstract principle, is nothing more nor less than this, that to make any man a slave, or to keep him a slave, is to violate his essential rights—to transgress eternal justice—to break the first laws of religion and morality. There is nothing abstract in this. The statement is, that a cruel wrong is done to the slave, in opposition to the will of God, which is

the standard of all judgment, and of all conduct ; and the necessary inference is, that the wrong must be immediately redressed, because, to persevere in inflicting it, is to persevere in the very thing which involves the guilt of disobeying God. To adopt the views which Mr. Combe seems to avow, would, in my opinion, lay every moral obligation at the feet of wordly expediency. I strongly suspect that he has got his notions of this subject from the West Indies ; for I find that a Mr. Hinds, in Barbadoes, when defending Colonial Slavery, asserts, that “ all the evils of slavery are abstract, and that all its blessings are positive.” (*Laughter.*) Why, Sir, had Mr. Hinds reversed the proposition, and said that all the evils of slavery are positive, and all its blessings abstract, he would have been nearer both to truth and common sense. Is the application of the cart-whip to the slave’s bare back an abstract evil ? Yes ; it tears the flesh from the bones, and that is abstraction sure enough. But in no other sense is the evil of the cart-whip abstract. And where are the positive blessings ? I know of none, unless it be a blessing to give the poor slave as much food and clothing and repose as will enable him to perform all the work he is compelled to do, in order to produce so much sugar, and put so much money into his master’s pocket. (*Cheers.*) Not one whit less absurd is the proposition of my friend Mr. Combe as to the abstract principle. That we should obey the will of the Almighty, and that we should not continue to do what he has forbidden, is not an abstract principle—it is a concrete principle, for ever dwelling in the Christian’s mind, pressing upon his conscience, and influencing his conduct. Slavery—being in direct hostility to that will, and an impious defiance of it—is a crime which must be immediately and unreservedly abandoned, as much at least as any other species of criminality whatever.

My friend, Mr. Combe, says, that to “ emancipate the slaves instantly would be to turn them adrift from the stay which has hitherto sustained them, and to withdraw the motives which have hitherto inspired them, without preparing them to substitute better from their own resources.” The stay which has hitherto supported them is the care taken of them by their master in consideration of their labouring for his profit, and henceforth, they will just do that freely, which heretofore they have done by compulsion—for unless they work, I fear much that neither will they get any thing to eat. And then as to the *motives* which Mr. C. speaks of with so much complacency—what, I ask, are these motives which have hitherto inspired the slaves ? Inspiration, indeed ! Does Mr. C. refer to the lacerating cart-whip, the prickly ebony, the horrible bamboo ? (*Hear, hear, and cheers.*) And is he prepared to maintain either the justice or the mercy of such motives as these ? O, we are told, that the slaves will not work without them. But, Sir, I now personate the slave, and I say, in answer to those who use such an argument, “ What title have you to lay upon me one stripe, when I have committed no crime ? Has God given you power to use me as your horse or your mule ? Then show me your commission from heaven that I may submit. (*Cheers.*) But you can show no such warrant. And, therefore, I am as free in the sight of my Maker as you are. Your keeping me in bondage is a crime—every exaction of labour from me is injustice

—every punishment you inflict upon me is cruelty.” Sir, I defy any man to say a word in reply to this appeal of the slave. And yet, here Mr. C. pleads for an indefinite continuance of that system which subjects the slaves to the grossest injustice and cruelty, and he does so under the very convenient and imposing phraseology of not “withdrawing the motives which have hitherto inspired them.” (*Loud cheers.*)

As a proof of the necessity of gradual emancipation, Mr. C. tells us the old story of a man who had been confined for thirty years in the Bastile, and who, when liberated, at the destruction of that horrid state prison, became more miserable by the suddenness of his transition; and adds, that his liberators would have been both more rational and more humane, had they provided an asylum to receive him. This, I agree with Mr. C. in thinking they ought to have done. But the analogy does not hold; for, instead of proposing that the slaves should be turned adrift and cared for no more, we propose that such arrangements shall be made as are suited to the exigencies of their condition. This is what our petition prays for, along with their emancipation. It is what they are entitled to in equity as well as in compassion; and far be it from us to say or do any thing that would disparage such a claim. But really Mr. C. does not seem to entertain adequate ideas on the subject. “His eye,” says he, “could not bear the effulgence of day, because its physical structure had accommodated itself to the twilight glimmering of a gloomy cell.” It is really trifling with the subject to talk thus gravely on the man’s eye being unable to bear the day-light—for that is the plain meaning of the words. Why, Sir, a green shade would have answered all the purpose. (*Laugh.*) And then, Sir, I would infinitely rather be a *freeman*, with my eyes hermetically sealed against all the beauties of the earth, and all the magnificence of the firmament, than I would be a *slave*, with my eyes wide open to look upon my chains that were never to be broken, (*cheers*) and upon my task-masters, who were never to have done with oppressing me, and upon my dearest kindred who were either enjoying a blessing from which I was for ever excluded, or to be my fellow-sufferers without hope, under the basest and bitterest of all human degradation. (*Great cheering.*)

Then Mr. Combe speaks of the French Revolution of 1789 as contrasted with that of 1830. In the former case, the people were not prepared for freedom, and therefore ran to all manner of excess; whereas, in the latter, they were prepared for it, by living under the charter, and therefore acted so as to gain the admiration of the world. But Mr. C. should recollect that in the case of the French, in 1789, there was no superior power to check or prevent those outrages which owed their existence and their enormity to the infidelity, the profligacy, the despotism of the men who had ruled over them, while in the present case the slaves are to be set free by a Government which can coerce them when they become free as well as it coerces them now that they are in bondage, and may, by virtue of its dominion, and must, in the discharge of its duty, provide both for their well-doing and their well-being in the most effectual manner. And I may ask, moreover, if the French acted so nobly in 1830 from having been trained to correct thinking and feeling under the charter, how was it that they happened to get the charter? And

whether it was likely they would have obtained such a schoolmaster as the charter for many ages, if that other revolution had not previously taken place, which notwithstanding filled all Europe with horror and alarm. At all events, between the case of the French Revolution and of the emancipation of the slaves there is no parallel. The circumstances are evidently and totally different.

Mr. C. has also brought to his aid the subject of the press-gang,—we would be punished by the law, he says, if we deforced a press-gang, although we might urge the plea of eternal justice. Here again the analogy fails. The impressment of seamen is only justified by its defenders—I am none of them, however—on the ground of state necessity in a time of urgent peril; when that necessity ceases, they exchange the ship of war for the merchant vessel. And seamen when they choose their profession either know, or should know, that this is one of the risks to which they expose themselves by their preference of a maritime life. But slavery is engaged in, and carried on, by a class of individuals who have no other end to serve than the gratification of their own avarice; and, alas! the poor slaves have no option,—they are not allowed to fix on a profession which would exempt them from the hazard of bondage,—they are born slaves, or they are compelled to be slaves by a brute force which they cannot possibly resist,—and to the wrongs which they suffer there is no prospect of any termination. And with all this, we defend not the expedient of impressing seamen, and trust that the day is not far distant when it will be renounced as great impolicy and unnecessary hardship, though it may not be a violation of essential right, as slavery must unquestionably, and in every point of view, be deemed.

(*Cheers.*)

The grand scheme which Mr. C. proposes for rendering emancipation safe consists in “making it imperative on the planters to cultivate the moral and intellectual powers of their slaves.” Truly, Sir, I am sorry to observe that such a philosopher should publish such an absurd proposition. It betrays great ignorance of the state of matters in our colonies, and, besides, indicates an inacquaintance with the treatment and education of mind of which I could scarcely have suspected him to be capable. How can you force the planters to do any thing which, they tell you, is to ruin them? With what propriety can you urge them to give instruction to beings whom they regard as their mere property, and classify with their mules, and oxen, and other stock? If, indeed, the burlesque view of phrenology, which has been given by its enemies, were correct and true, we might succeed in the enterprize, by putting the heads of the slaves into moulds so formed as to produce all the proper bumps, and to bring them all out in their right relative proportions, so that we could elaborate the talents and dispositions that we wished to encourage (*Laughter*),—though, even here, seeing the result was to be emancipation, the planters would much rather break the moulds than use them. But to expect that these gentlemen, after all the avowals they have made on this subject, and considering the means and opportunities which they have to thwart your every effort, should set about “cultivating the moral and intellectual powers of their slaves,” because they were commanded to do so with a view to rob them of their

property, is about the wildest and most chimerical idea that has ever been broached since the commencement of the controversy. Give the slaves their liberty, and then you can secure their full and universal instruction; but as long as they are slaves, held to be the property of their masters, and involved in all the disadvantages of colonial bondage, barriers to their religious and moral culture will be set up, which I defy all your parliamentary enactments, and all your orders in council, to surmount or to overthrow. The principles of the slave system, the doctrines of the slave-holders, the habits and circumstances of the slave colonies, and the uniform history of the slave question,—all unite in demonstrating the vanity and fallaciousness of Mr. C.'s benevolent speculation.

I am afraid, Sir, that I have exhausted the patience of the meeting (*Cheers*), but I hope you will permit me to say a few words on the subject of compensation. (*Hear, hear.*) And here I am free to confess, that on this point there is, among those who are for immediate emancipation, a difference of opinion. Some are for giving compensation to the slave-holders, and others are for refusing it. It is a fair subject of discussion, both in Parliament and out of it. And when the proper period arrives, it ought to be discussed with candour and deliberation. I have no scruple and no hesitation in saying, that, for my own part, I object to the doctrine of compensation. Our resolutions and our petition say nothing on that topic; but I am anxious to submit my views with respect to a claim which is most resolutely enforced by the enemies of abolition, and urged to such an extent, as to convince me that they use it as a bug-bear to frighten us from our purpose—as a check-mate to all our exertions for the deliverance of our oppressed fellow-subjects in the colonies.\*

And here, Sir, I would observe, in the *first* place, that when our opponents plead for compensation, because our Legislature sanctioned slavery, they seem to proceed upon the supposition that *sanctioning*

\* The value of the slaves has been estimated by the anti-abolitionists at *eighty millions* sterling! This is about as extravagant as some numerical statements which have lately appeared in certain newspapers respecting the property and interests that are at stake in the event of emancipation. Nothing can be more absurd than these are, or more artful than the use that is made of them by their promulgators. The colonial property, for instance, is set down at L.200,000,000! And all this, the reader is left to infer, is to be destroyed if the negroes are rescued from slavery! The destructive effect of the West India climate on our soldiers and sailors, and the loss of revenue involved in the loss of lives, are most carefully concealed; but the imports and exports, the shipping tonnage, and the employment of seamen, are all stated at the utmost rate, as if they were to be utterly annihilated by the measure we are pursuing—as if the colonial soil were to become instantly sterile, or there would be nobody to cultivate it, or all demand for its produce would cease—as if ships, and men, and capital, and exchange of goods would not be called for as much at least when slaves and trade should be made free, as they are now that unjust monopoly and more detestable bondage are permitted to exist! And all the while, the statements referred to, sent forth by men of Christian principle and tender sensibility, are given to the entire exclusion of the claims which our enslaved fellow-subjects have to their liberty, on the ground of moral and religious obligation, whatever sacrifices of a pecuniary kind the duty of satisfying these indefeasible claims may require. We are found fault with for “*unceremoniously*” disposing of so much property—but what fault is found for “*unceremoniously*” keeping 800,000 human beings in bondage as the instruments of avarice and the victims of oppression?

is equivalent to *compelling*. Our Legislature did not compel the planters to engage in the slave system. The planters engaged in it voluntarily. The Legislature only gave them protection. And, therefore, they became liable to all the risks which, in these circumstances, such a commercial enterprise implied, just as they would have become liable to all the risks peculiar to any other species of commercial enterprise in which they chose to adventure their capital.

Now, in the *second* place, they should have known, as they did know, that slave-holding is unchristian and immoral—a violation of the law of God. My friend Mr. Combe asserts, in his letter, that “this argument would be irresistible if man were a perfect being”—by which he means to tell us that the planters were ignorant of the truth I have stated respecting the inherent iniquity of making man the property of man. Strange! Admit this reasoning, and every miscreant may plead for impunity and permission to continue in sin—because, forsooth, man is not a perfect being! And truly, if the planters—white men—many of whom have been brought up in this country, and have received a liberal or Christian education—if they are so imperfect as not to know that it is contrary to the divine will to make or to keep their brethren slaves, when is it that the slaves themselves will be fit for emancipation by that cultivation of their moral and intellectual powers, which Mr. Combe asserts to be necessary as a prerequisite to their getting liberty? (*Laugh.*) Sir, I repeat my proposition, that the planters, when they embarked in the slave system, either knew, or ought to have known, that they embarked in a guilty speculation, and embarked in it on the implied condition, that whenever those whose duty it was, and in whose power it was, to emancipate the slaves, chose to put an end to the crime, their fictitious rights fell to the ground, and they suffered no more than they were supposed to lay their account with, when they first intermeddled with the unrighteous traffic.

In the *third* place, they have been gaining by that system of slave-holding which we wish to abolish. If they have not found it profitable, why have they continued in it, and why are they still so desirous of continuing in it? And on the hypothesis, which is a fair one, that the thing has been lucrative, then surely it is perfectly equitable to let that consideration be a set-off, so far at least as it goes, against the demands which they make for compensation. Let them be contented with what they have already got, instead of grasping at more.

But let it be remembered, in the *fourth* place, that they have been all along gaining at our expense. The money which has gone into their pockets has been taken out of ours. We have been subjected to a kind of poll-tax to uphold their iniquitous system. In bounties for the sugars which they raise, and in protecting duties on the East India sugar, which for their sake is not allowed to come into the market on equal terms, we pay about a million and a half every year. And this gives L.800 or L.900 per annum to each slave-holding sugar-planter; some get more, some get less, but that is the average! We must not, however, forget to add to this the taxes which are levied from us to afford them protection, and which amount to no less an annual sum than above L.2,000,000. Really, Sir, if compensation is at all due, it is due to us, and not to the slave-holders. But, besides this, it is absurd to talk of

their right to compensation, when our Legislature may, without any act of emancipation whatever, but simply by ceasing to tax this country for their support and aggrandizement, render their slave property, as they call it, utterly useless. Our Parliament has only to withdraw that bounty, to repeal those protecting duties, and to reduce those naval and military establishments, which are employed for upholding the edifice of guilt and inhumanity that has been erected in the slave colonies, and it must tumble into ruins. And do not moral rectitude and sound policy declare, that it would be better for all parties simply to emancipate the slaves, and make the necessary arrangements for rendering that deed at once safe and efficacious? If this be not acceded to by the planters, they have no right to any farther indulgence. We are called upon to petition—and Parliament are bound by every sacred obligation, and, if they are dutiful representatives, they will not fail to listen to us, when we ask them, for relief from the whole of that odious burden of taxation which is laid upon us, to the effect of oppressing a multitude of our fellow-subjects, and bearing us down with an accumulating load of national guilt. To talk of compensation, in these circumstances, I can scarcely regard in any other light than that of an insult.

Sir, I must add to this, that the slave-holders have long known of the intention—the determination of this country to abolish slavery. It has been told to them, and impressed upon them, in language that they could neither misapprehend nor forget. And have they been preparing for such a consummation? Not in the very least degree. They have obstinately repelled all advice, and resisted all authority, on this point. And if from this cause they shall sustain any damage, whose fault is it? It is all and exclusively their own. And, consequently, to grant them compensation, would be to reward their rebellion and perverseness.

I have to argue still farther, that this plea for compensation is not in accordance with what has been deemed right, or with what has been actually done, in analogous cases. When the slave trade was put an end to by legislative enactment, was any compensation asked or given, though many had embarked hundreds of thousands of pounds in the abominable commerce, and though the ships, being built for that peculiar service, were almost useless for any other? No, Sir. At one period the colliers in this country were all in a state of slavery. The Legislature at length set them free. Did their masters solicit, or did they obtain, any compensation? No, Sir. In neither of these cases was compensation ever mooted. In both of them the persons who were deprived of their *property*—I use the word from courtesy—had enjoyed protection and encouragement from the Legislature of the country, and might have used that as an argument in their own behalf. But nothing of the kind was attempted. And why, I ask, should any compensation be insisted on in the case of the slave-holder now, whose reason for claiming that species of redress is not a whit stronger than that which might have been employed in either of the cases I have mentioned? (*Cheers.*)

If compensation is still proposed as a *sine qua non*, I appear in name of the slave, who is surely the most aggrieved party in this case, and is entitled to compensation before all others. And I say to the Legisla-

ture, "You cannot compensate me for the wrongs which the planters have inflicted upon me, with your countenance, and under your protection. These wrongs are beyond calculation. But, with a moderation which I have not experienced, I only ask you to emancipate me, and to give me the means of rendering my liberty available for my prosperity and happiness." And I say to the planters, "You owe me a debt which you cannot reckon, and which you cannot pay. The injuries I have endured in soul and body at your hand cannot be atoned for by all the treasures you possess. But I ask nothing more than this, that you do not oppose the scheme of mercy which my friends in Britain are devising in my favour,—that you ask no compensation from them as the price of my deliverance,—and that you willingly co-operate with them in undoing my heavy burden, and in providing for my temporal welfare, and my moral improvement." Now, Sir, if the Legislature and the planters shall turn a deaf ear to such appeals as these, then I must say that there is to be as much injustice in the deliverance as there was in the bondage itself,—and I must return to my demand for compensation to the slave, as having the prior right to it. And after you have fully compensated him for the toils, and the stripes, and the debasement, and the unnumbered evils, with which he has been iniquitously visited, I ask what will be left in your coffers for his guilty and undeserving oppressors?

On this point, Sir, I have to observe, in the *last* place, that compensation is a fair and legitimate demand, only if loss be sustained. But according to our view of the effects of emancipation, not only will there be no loss to the planters, but they will be unspeakable gainers in safety, in comfort, in revenue. This we think demonstrable from all that is known of the comparative value of slave and of free labour, and of all the advantages that accompany the relationship of master and servant, as contrasted with the dangers and evils that are inseparable from the unhallowed connection of tyrant and slave.

These, Sir, are my sentiments with regard to compensation. But you will observe, that in the petition which our Committee proposes to send to Parliament, we have not introduced a word upon that subject. We do agree in objecting to it as a preliminary to abolition. We hold that there must be loss experienced, and clearly made out to have been sustained, before any thing like damages can be thought of or awarded. When the period arrives for ascertaining that point, it will be considered, and perhaps we may find it necessary to meet and petition in reference to it. (*Cheers.*) But, in the mean time, we can conceive some cases in which considerations of humanity to helpless individuals—to widows, to minors, &c., would dictate a liberal treatment. And we do not wish the Legislature to shut its doors against any applications for redress. Let every one have free access there, and let the requests of every one meet with a patient hearing. Only let us have the abolition of slavery out and out, as that which necessarily takes precedence of all measures that can be suggested by its supposed effect on the fortunes of those whose own misconduct has led to it. And sure I am, Sir, that doing justice to the slaves is the best guarantee that can be given for doing justice to the planters. (*Applause.*)

And equally sure I am, that the gross partiality hitherto shown to that body by our parliament and our government, afford security enough that their claims, whenever they are preferred, will not be rashly or wrongously rejected. (*Cheering.*)

There is yet one topic remaining, which I must touch upon, though I do it with great reluctance; but I could not do my duty to myself, nor to the great cause we have met to promote, were I to pass it over without particular notice. In the course of some remarks which I made at the late meeting, when proposing an amendment on the resolutions, I made use of the word *bloodshed*. I was immediately, and without any attention being paid to the way in which I introduced my observations, rudely assailed, and publicly accused, as one reckless of the shedding of blood. This is a charge, Sir, which I then declared, and now again declare, to be altogether unfounded. (*Hear, hear.*) And I must say, the charge came with a bad grace indeed, from the gentleman who made it,\* considering that, but a few weeks before, he had presided at a meeting of the citizens of Edinburgh, assembled to congratulate the French people on their brave and heroic resistance to oppression on the part of their rulers, and on their attainment of those great political rights which they wrested from the hand of the tyrant, although these were acquired at the expense of 8000 human lives sacrificed in the course of that short and glorious struggle for liberty. (*Great cheering.*) And am I to be censured, rebuked, put down, reprobated as heedless of massacre, because I made the *supposition* that some blood might be spilt in emancipating 800,000 of our fellow-men,—yes, our fellow-subjects too, in the British colonies. After all, Sir, it was not I who made the supposition. It has been always advanced and pressed by the opponents of emancipation, and has been even thrown in our teeth by the advocates of *gradual* abolition, in whose name the Lord Provost spoke, not so much in the way of a mere supposition, as in that of a certainty, which they think forms a valid objection to our plan. I took up the objection as I found it, which I was both entitled and bound to do, and was using my best endeavour to repel it as a groundless and imaginary one. I distinctly stated—I called on the meeting to mark me when I stated—that for my own part I had not the slightest apprehension that any such consequences, as our opponents professed to dread, would ever ensue; but I added, that if circumstances did render it necessary, I was not one of those who would say that we ought *not* to emancipate 800,000 human beings from otherwise hopeless bondage, merely because some blood might be shed in accomplishing that achievement of moral justice and Christian humanity. Alas! that we should be told in this our classical metropolis, and in this our enlightened day, that liberty is not to be aspired after, and not to be received even by slaves, unless the acquisition can be made with the absolute certainty of that acquisition being bloodless. I ask, Sir, in what region of the globe, and in what period of the world, it ever happened that any revolution in which despots were humbled, and the rights of the people were regained, without the risk at least of some such sacrifice as that which has excited so great a horror in our anti-abolitionists, and in our advocates for *gradualism*? And are we to be as-

\* The Lord Provost of Edinburgh, who was Chairman of the meeting.

sailed by all this sentimentalism, while we have yet fresh in our memory the rejoicings that took place among us—and none rejoiced more heartily or loudly than the gentlemen who have now become so tender hearted—when the armies of this country withstood the despot of Europe in a series of bloody battles, and at last overthrew him in that bloodiest of all the bloody fields that we fought for our independence—the field of Waterloo? (*Immense applause.*) Sir, I again repel the charge so unworthily brought against me; and maintain, that nothing but personal malignity, and an utter disregard of truth and candour, could have influenced those who afterwards deliberately and in print loaded me with such vile misrepresentations. (*Cheers, and some hissing.*) Gentlemen may hiss as they please; but so far from pleading guilty either to the feeling or to the language imputed to me, I have from the first maintained that no such disastrous effects as those conjectured or anticipated by our opponents were in the very least degree likely to happen. On the contrary, Sir, if any such events happen, they will be occasioned by the delay that we deprecate, and are endeavouring to prevent. (*Cheers.*) Think you, Sir, that deliverance will not come ere long to that multitude of our fellow-creatures, who are groaning beneath the yoke of intolerable bondage, in our colonial dependencies? Yes, deliverance for them will be achieved; and if our Legislature will not make haste to do what it can so easily and safely do, and what every principle of justice and every maxim of expediency calls upon it to do,—emancipate them without loss of time, by its own authority, and with its own arm, their deliverance will come with a terrible vengeance on those who are now the chief and the guilty cause of its being refused.

But if our rulers and legislators will undertake to emancipate the slaves, and do it as it ought to be done, immediately, I beg those who set themselves against such a measure, to point out the danger, and to prove it. The *onus* lies upon *them*. And what evidence do they give us? Where is it to be found? In what circumstances shall we discover it? From what principles and probabilities shall we infer it? We must not have mere hypothesis—mere allegations—mere fancied horrors, dressed up in frightful language. We must have proof to substantiate, in some good measure, their theory of rebellion, warfare, and blood. If any such thing exists, let them produce it. Sure am I, it is not in the conduct which the slaves have hitherto maintained. Notwithstanding all that these poor beings have suffered from the exactions and ruthlessness of their oppressors, how seldom has any case of insurrection occurred, and how easily have all such tumults been put down! And while we may expect a more cheerful submission after they are made free, than can be looked for so long as they are in cruel bondage, the same strength that has heretofore coerced them remains to coerce them still. We are told, indeed, to look to Hayti as furnishing an example of the horrors that would be realized in our colonies, if the slaves were immediately set free. But it appears to me that the case of Hayti, so far from being an instance in favour of the alarmists, is an instance that may be confidently appealed to in support of the more quiet expectations which we entertain of the result. The disturbances in that island, the insubordination and bloodshed which prevailed in it, were owing to the white

men, who introduced the revolutionary principles of France, liberated the slaves to serve their own ambitious or revengeful purposes, and instigated them to the atrocities that were committed. But when the black population were left to themselves, they at length settled down into social order and regular government. Look at the Haytians as they are now, and have been for many years, and you see a peaceable, industrious, prosperous, and, as far as can be in their circumstances, a happy as well as independent community! (*Hear, hear.*)

It is quite absurd and delusive to say that *eight hundred thousand* slaves are to be let loose at once upon the white population. This is calculated to alarm the ignorant and the timid; but it is in reality a gross misstatement. The slaves are not to be let loose upon their masters. They are merely to be made free, and are still to be subject to that legal and adequate control which it is the duty of our government to impose upon all its subjects, in every part of the British dominions, and which it will especially exercise where the necessity for it is great and pressing. Then from the 800,000 it is fair to subtract the half as consisting of females, and whom we cannot surely dread as very formidable in their power of resisting the constituted authorities or the military force. Still further, subtract the male children under twelve years of age, who may be classed with the women as to their inability to frighten or annoy either the planters or his Majesty's troops. Yet again, subtract all who are aged and sickly, or of docile disposition and submissive habits, attached to the masters that have been kind and merciful to them, and who would either not engage in revolt, or assist in quelling it. Once more, subtract that portion who have, in spite of all obstructions, imbibed the principles and spirit of Christianity, who would employ their influence and their efforts to prevent every sort of rapine, and to give to the abolition its full moral effect—and whom, though brethren in Christ Jesus, your *gradualists* would consign to unrequited toil, to undeserved suffering, to cruel bondage, during the remainder of their lives. Make all these deductions, and of the 800,000 slaves, who, in the mass, are so apt to strike people's minds with terror, you will leave a number that the planters and the Government should be ashamed to confess that they could not cope with, or preserve in due submission and in tranquillity—especially as they happen to be in numerous divisions, separated from each other by sea, and therefore unable to concentrate their hostility, or to unite their efforts, if they should choose to rebel.

I request the meeting now to turn their attention to the state of the free black population, which forms an important element, though too little heeded, in the argument I am now addressing to you. The grand distinction in the colonies is between the white people and the people of colour. The white people treat all the people of colour with perfect contempt. And the latter have every reason to feel and show resentment to the former. But those of them who are free have been guilty of no attempts to overturn a dominion, which they must every day feel to be of the most galling kind. And think not that it is on account of their being less considerable in number. On the contrary, the white people, in the Crown and Chartered Colonies, are only 119,000, whereas the free blacks amount to no fewer than 144,000. But, Sir,

in the character and condition of the free blacks you will find a solution of the fact, and you will find moreover, an additional security against all the evils which have been so eagerly pressed upon us, as likely to result from an immediate and total abolition. I have told you their number, 144,000. Think next of their wealth. That is allowed to be very great. In some places their opulence rivals or surpasses that of the white people. And thus they have a stake in the country which will make them more than ordinarily anxious to repress even the beginnings of any tumult, from which they could look for nothing but the plunder and destruction of their property. They are more than opulent: many of them are remarkably intelligent, men of good education, of liberal ideas, conversant with the government of states, and with whatever contributes to the public weal. They have even established newspapers, in which they discuss the very question of the abolition of slavery, and advocate the measure both with zeal and talent, and in other respects display an extent of knowledge, a power of reasoning, and a tone of moral and religious feeling, which might be transferred with considerable advantage into a certain portion of the newspaper press of Edinburgh. (*Cheers and laughter.*) Besides this, the free blacks are distinguished by their loyalty, and their decided attachment to the mother country—so much so, that when in consequence of the interference of our government the white colonists threatened to rebel, they were told through the medium of the Journals I have alluded to, that if they did so, they might be assured that they would be opposed by the free blacks, and by all the coloured population to a man, in defence of British sovereignty. (*Great applause.*) And in addition to their loyalty, consider their general good conduct. I do not hold them out as free from many and great vices. They retain, in some instances, the greatest of all vices, that of keeping slaves. This, however, arises, in a great measure, it is probable, from the external circumstances in which they find themselves, by reason of the general system that prevails around them. And it augurs well for their being ready to renounce that abominable nuisance, that their newspapers plead for emancipation,\* and that they are superior to the white population as to public morals. By a return to the House of Commons of the number of criminal prosecutions in Jamaica, we perceive that the criminal prosecutions of the whites were to those of the free blacks, in the proportion of *three to one*. (*Great cheering.*) Nay, but, my friends, you have only got one half of the interesting fact: for I have to add that the white population is to that of the free blacks nearly as *one to three*—there being of free blacks 40,000 and of whites only 15,000! (*Continued cheering.*) Taking into account the circumstances I have just stated respecting the free blacks—their number, their wealth, their loyalty, their general character, every one must see that we may safely look to that portion of the West India community as standing between the colonists and all danger that may

\* It has been proposed in Jamaica, to form a Society there, for the Abolition of Negro Slavery; the proposal seems to be favourably entertained; and there can be little doubt that such an Institution, if wisely conducted, will be productive of most beneficial effects.

be apprehended from the emancipation of the slaves ; and coupling this with the other particulars to which I formerly adverted, it does appear to me that we have the amplest security for that measure, how soon soever it may be carried, being as bloodless and peaceable as our hearts could desire. I have no fear—no, not the shadow of it, that any of the dreaded mischiefs will ensue from the course of proceeding that we are pressing on the Legislature. In my conscience I deem them all chimerical, and got up chiefly for the purpose of deterring us from insisting on that act of simple but imperative justice which we call upon the British Parliament to perform. (*Applause.*)

But if you push me, and still urge the argument of insurrection and bloodshed, for which you are far more indebted to fancy than to fact, as I have shown you, then I say, be it so. I repeat that maxim, taken from a heathen book, but pervading the whole Book of God, *Fiat justitia —ruat cœlum.* Righteousness, Sir, is the pillar of the universe. Break down that pillar, and the universe falls into ruin and desolation. But preserve it, and though the fair fabric may sustain partial dilapidations, it may be rebuilt and repaired—it *will* be rebuilt, and repaired, and restored to all its pristine strength, and magnificence, and beauty. (*Cheering.*) If there must be violence, let it even come, for it will soon pass away—let it come and rage its little hour, since it is to be succeeded by lasting freedom, and prosperity, and happiness. (*Cheering.*) Give me the hurricane rather than the pestilence. Give me the hurricane, with its thunder, and its lightning, and its tempest ;—give me the hurricane, with its partial and temporary devastations, awful though they be ;—give me the hurricane, with its purifying, healthful, salutary effects ;—give me that hurricane, infinitely rather than the noisome pestilence, whose path is never crossed, whose silence is never disturbed, whose progress is never arrested, by one sweeping blast from the heavens ; which walks peacefully and sullenly through the length and breadth of the land, breathing poison into every heart, and carrying havoc into every home, enervating all that is strong, defacing all that is beautiful, and casting its blight over the fairest and happiest scenes of human life—and which, from day to day, and from year to year, with intolerant and interminable malignity, sends its thousands and its tens of thousands of hapless victims into the ever-yawning and never-satisfied grave !

(*Cheering and waving of hats, for several minutes, followed the conclusion of Dr. Thomson's speech, which lasted for about two hours and a half.*)

## APPENDIX.

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At the meeting which took place on Friday, the 8th October, and at which Dr. Thomson moved his amendment on the resolutions that were brought forward, he objected to the clause which proposed that all the children born on and after a particular day (January 1, 1831,) should be declared free. This clause, the Committee on the platform, acquiescing in his objection, agreed to omit. And as it was not referred to in the petition which he submitted to the meeting of the 19th October, he did not think it necessary to discuss that part of the subject. It may be useful, however, to state here the grounds on which such an arrangement appeared to him inadmissible.

In the *first* place, it amounts to an indirect sanction of the continued slavery of all who are now alive, and of all who may be born before the period fixed upon. This is a renunciation of the great moral principles upon which the demand for abolition proceeds. It consigns more than 800,000 human beings to bondage and oppression, while their title to freedom is both indisputable and acknowledged. And it is not merely an inconsistency on the part of the petitioners, and a violation of the duty which they owe to such a multitude of their fellow-men, but it weakens or surrenders the great argument by which they enforce their application for the extinction of colonial slavery.

Besides, it is vain to expect that the planters will acquiesce in such a prospective measure, any more than in the liberation of the existing slaves, for the progeny of the existing slaves must be considered by them as much a part of their property as these slaves themselves. And they would regard it equally unjust to deprive them of what is hereafter to be produced from their own slave stock, as it would be to deprive a farmer, by an anticipating law, of all the foals and of all the calves that might be produced in his stable and in his cow-house, after a given specified date.

We must be true to our own maxims, which are taken from the word of God; and ask for all that we are entitled to have on the ground of justice and humanity, and be contented with nothing less.

In the *second* place, the plan objected to is not merely an acquiescence in the continuance of crime, it is a violation of the best feelings of our

nature. For, let any man but reflect on the circumstance of children being born to slavery, merely because they came into the world the last hour of December 1830, instead of the first hour of January 1, 1831—and of children in the same family, brothers and sisters—some of them destined to bondage for life, and others gifted with freedom, for no other reason than that the former were born before, and the latter after, a particular day of a particular year—and of parents being unjustly and inhumanly flogged in the very sight of their offspring arbitrarily made free, while they are as arbitrarily kept slaves—let any man but reflect on these things, and unless the sensibilities of his heart be paralysed even to deadness, he must surely revolt at such a cruel and cold blooded allotment in the fortune of those little ones, and be satisfied with nothing short of the emancipation of the whole community, without a single exception.

In the *third* place, supposing all children born after January 1, 1831, were declared free, how are they to be educated? That they may be prepared for the enjoyment of that liberty with which you have invested them, they must undergo a particular and appropriate training. So say the *gradualists*. Very well; under whom are they to get this training? Are they to be separated from their parents? Is that dearest of natural ties to be broken asunder? Is this necessary for your plan? And are not you thus endeavouring to cure one species of wickedness by the instrumentality of another? But if they are to be left with their parents and brought up under their care, then either they will be imbued with the faults and degeneracies that are characteristic of slavery, and consequently be as unfit for freedom as those who have not been disenthralled; or they will be well nurtured and well instructed by their parents, and this implies a confession that their parents themselves are sufficiently prepared for liberty, and that there is no good reason for withholding from them, the boon that is bestowed upon their children.

Whatever view, in short, we take of the question, the prospective plan is full of difficulty or contradictions, and we are made more sensible than ever that there is nothing left for us, but to take the consistent, honest, uncompromising course of demanding the abolition of slavery with respect to the present, as well as to every future generation of the negroes in our colonies.

In 1792, Mr. Dundas proposed that the slave-trade should cease in 1800, and also that every negro child born after that period in the West Indies should be free. To this proposal, Mr. Wilberforce and his friends resolutely objected. They did so on religious and moral grounds—which that distinguished friend of humanity satisfactorily explained at the last meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society in London. It was well that the abolitionists had the wisdom and the fortitude, to refuse the insidious boon which was offered to them by Mr. Dundas. Had they accepted of it, they would not only have forfeited the reputation which they had acquired by acting upon steady, fixed, immutable principles, but pretexts would have been found for withdrawing the concessions that had been made merely to avoid incessant warfare on such a topic; at any rate, the whole tone of the argument for abolishing the trade and emancipating the slaves, would have been lowered in a lamentable de-

gree ; and, in all probability, the prospect of achieving the latter of these objects, would at this moment have been more obscure and more remote than it appears to be even amidst all the discouragements we are experiencing. Let us not do evil that good may come. Let us keep upon the high ground which we occupy. Our triumph may not, for that reason, be so speedy, though in this respect also we have good hope ; but it will be more certain, and when it does come, it will be more complete, more gratifying, more honourable, and more permanent.

FINIS.

EDINBURGH :

PRINTED BY A. BALFOUR AND CO. NIDDRY STREET.



