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A
VINDICATION
OF THE
ADDRESS
TO THE
PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN,
ON THE USE OF
WEST INDIA PRODUCE.
WITH SOME
OBSERVATIONS AND FACTS RELATIVE TO THE
SITUATION OF SLAVES.

IN REPLY TO
A FEMALE APOLOGIST FOR SLAVERY.

BY RICHARD HILLIER,
FORMERLY A SAILOR IN THE WEST INDIA TRADE.

From Hardness of Heart and Blindness of Mind, good Lord, deliver us.

L O N D O N:

SOLD BY M. GURNEY, N^o 128, HOLBORN, AND T. KNOTT,
N^o 47, LOMBARD-STREET.

1791.

Price Twopence.

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A

LETTER, &c.

MADAM,

A FEW days ago, your pamphlet was put into my hands. Having rejected the produce of the West Indian sugar cane ever since parliament thought proper to turn a deaf ear to the supplications of the nation, in behalf of the injured Africans, I rejoiced to find that the propriety of purchasing commodities, obtained by a systematic course of legal oppression, was in a fair way of being investigated; but I little thought that, in a nation tenacious of its liberty, which had given birth to a Macauley, a Barbauld, or a Williams, I ever should have found a female apologist for slavery. Had not some general idea of the deceitfulness of the heart put me upon my guard, I could not have imagined that the holy scriptures would have been quoted in support of villainy and fraud. People are sometimes the unwilling instruments of accelerating general good: you may have the pleasure of reflecting hereafter, that the discussion you promoted was fatal to your cause. In order to secure the attainment of so desirable an end, I shall discuss the doctrines you have laid down, as concisely as I am able. Should I, in the

course of argument, treat them, or their author, with too little respect, my excuse will be, that when writing against cruelty it is natural for me to forget, that I am writing to a woman. At your first off-set, you take care to inform us, " That you are not so devoid of the feelings of humanity, or Christian principles, as to wish slavery and oppression to any individual of the human race." It was kind in you to tell the world of your humanity and your Christianity; as, without some such friendly hint, no exertion of human sagacity could have discovered that you possessed any thing like the humanity of the eighteenth century, or the Christianity of the New Testament. But if you are *really* an enemy to slavery, why do you plead in its defence? You are at some pains to inform us of its great antiquity. You tell us that it was regularly carried on when Jacob's sons sold their brother. We believe it was before that time. We believe,

" Proud Nimrod first the bloody chace began :
 " A mighty hunter, and his prey was man !"

But if the antiquity of slavery stamp it with dignity, how honourable is murder! for, in the days of our first parents, Cain rose up against Abel, his brother, and slew him. As to what was tolerated among the Jews, it is not of sufficient importance to our present question to merit much attention; as, if it proves any thing, it proves, that as they were permitted to enslave all nations, the claim of us poor Englishmen to liberty, is contrary to the revealed will of heaven. Your husband should also be informed that polygamy is very ancient, that it was universal at the time the law was given to Israel, that it was in use among the Jews, and that, like slavery, it continues among that people in various parts of the world to this day. Should the reduction of your theory to practice, produce any family uneasiness, you are not ignorant, that Moses suffered his disciples, to write bills of divorcement, and to put away their wives.

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The Romans, you inform us, “ with all their boasted liberty, practised slavery.” And it is also certain, that, with all their boasted knowledge, they practised the most stupid idolatry. These facts only prove that ignorance of liberty, and ignorance of piety, go hand in hand. Having established the antiquity of slavery, you exultingly exclaim, “ A custom thus ancient,—thus universal,—is it not more a matter of surprise, that it should so long have subsided in so many parts of the world, than that it still continues the scourge of Africa?” No: Rather let the heavens wonder, and the earth be astonished, that, while we are surrounded with so many instances where the name of Christ has reached the ear, we find so few where his religion has reached the heart; and that there should still exist men, who, while they pretend to love their neighbour as themselves, yet strain every nerve to detain him in perpetual bondage. This, *we are required to believe*, is not your case; you only reprobate the doctrine of the address, as: “ proposing means inadequate to its end. And recommending a real evil on the vague supposition that good may come.” Whether the means proposed by the author of the address, are adequate to their end or not, remains to be proved. And, with respect to the evil he recommends, we ought to have been informed, whether it is a natural or moral evil. As it breathes nothing but universal good-will to men, and contains no avowed sentiment inimical to Deity, if any evil is proposed it must be a natural evil: and we are justified in doing that, in order to secure a greater good. If not, why did you marry, and expose yourself to the probability of dying in child-birth? Or why do people in general submit to the amputation of a diseased limb? Are not the risk of death and amputation in themselves evils?

We are next told, that, “ The author’s calculation of the number of murders must certainly be exaggerated, as by the late regulation of the number in proportion to the ship’s tonnage, and the appointment of surgeons,
must

must needs prevent a great deal of the evils he mentions." Now would it not have been a little more modest just to have pointed out where a man's calculations were wrong, than to assert, "They must certainly be exaggerated, merely *because* they must? And should not you, who shudder at the thought of passing by a sugar-plum as a real evil, have given us an exact statement of the ratio of murder we might commit, without transgressing the limits of your curious humanity? Has your benevolent parliament regulated the quantity of bad weather the ships are to meet with on the middle passage? Have the sapient skulls of legislators devised a mode by which they can prevent a ship from sinking, when she springs a leak? Are your surgeons of Guinea-men such very clever fellows, above all the profession, that they can cure grief, and fear, and the effects of foul atmosphere? If you cannot answer these questions in the affirmative, tell us by what dispensation from a God of mercy, you consign just men and innocent children to a floating hell; or else relinquish your impious claim to Christianity. You inform us that, "It can be no more the interest of a planter to starve or murder his slave, than it is of a farmer to kill his horse." This stale argument *à priori* must be considered by those who have been in the West-Indies, or who have read the evidence before parliament, as a piece of impertinence not worth answering. But, if you will come before the public a second time, and attempt to prove that farmers never abuse their horses, never entrust them to their servants, never kill them when worn out; and, moreover, that a horse and an African are animals so near alike, that we have as much right to enslave the one as to saddle the other, then I will reason with you upon your own grounds.

There may possibly be a few persons in London who die in consequence of oppression, or who are murdered. But to say, that the number of injured ghosts who plant thorns on the pillows of their oppressors, amounts to three-

three-fourths of the robust young men who come from the country for employ, is to talk madly. The bare assertion of such nonsense, unsupported by evidence, indicates a mind either desperately weak, or desperately wicked.

You affirm that the pamphlet proves too much, consequently proves nothing; and, in confirmation of your position, you alledge, "That the gospel was propagated by the blood of its first votaries, the protestant religion by the same means. Must we, therefore, despise Christianity, renounce protestantism?" In order to derive any advantage from this left-handed logic, it is necessary you should prove, that the propagators of the gospel themselves violated the rights and liberties of one set of men, in order to obtain an article called the gospel, to sell for their own emolument to another. You ought farther to state that though this gospel was highly grateful to the receiver, it was what might be dispensed with without injury; and that, by a continual purchase of this gospel, you were continually creating fresh crimes, and continually rewarding the criminals. Had you stated the matter thus clearly, to the way-faring man, though a fool, your gospel would have appeared so odious, that if his heart was not harder than adamant, I am persuaded he would have rejected it.

With respect to our consumption of other luxuries procured by slavery, we may perhaps be reprehensible; but surely our minds have not arrived to that perfection of depravity, which emboldens men in the commission of one crime, from a consciousness that they daily commit half a dozen. By the bye, it is quite a mistake that all the produce of the East-Indies, and that all the gold and silver we use, is the production of slaves. And although it has been fashionable to abuse the servants of the East-India Company, yet it will be recorded by history, that there once existed a parliament which exhibited Articles of Impeachment against an individual for speculation and cruelty, and yet made

laws for the continuation of kidnapping, and set a price upon the heads of victims yet unborn. You strive hard to confound free, with compulsive labour; and to betray the people of this country into an opinion, that slavery and toil are synonymous terms. The reason is obvious, the people of England are inured to labour, and do not consider it an hardship; but they are accustomed to receive the reward of that labour; nor can they brook the idea of one man toiling at the discretion, and for the advantage of another. When once the people of England have seen the nakedness of slavery, those who now burn incense on her altars, will soon sing *requiems* to her soul.

British miners in particular, will not thank you for calling them under-ground slaves; nor for drawing a comparison between them and Africans. But, as you say their situation "seems unenviable even to a West-India slave," I can recommend an experiment which will furnish you with the most authentic intelligence on that head. The ladies in the West-Indies have a happy dexterity in slipping off their shoes, and beating the heels of them about the heads of their negroes. Now, with a very little practice upon your bed-post or dressing table, you will make a tolerable proficiency in the art. If ever afterwards you have an opportunity of visiting Newcastle or Kingswood, put your experiment in practice upon the head of the first collier you meet, and depend upon it, you will soon arrive at an absolute certainty about the comparative happiness of a free miner and a slave.

It is worthy of remark, that the mode you have adopted of supporting your cause, by mutilated portions of scripture, is the very same artifice which the devil made use of when he tempted Jesus Christ to commit suicide. Strange! that the wisdom of the serpent should suit your purpose better than the innocence of the dove. But, there is nothing new under the sun; the

the agency of similar causes will always be exerted to produce similar effects. As long as error is supported, scripture must be perverted.

As it does not signify what the conquering Israelites were allowed to do in the devoted land of Canaan, I shall leave you, "naturally to suppose" what you please, and to be as wise above what is written as you please, where our question is not concerned, while I proceed to examine that counsel which you have darkened by words, or rather by stripping it of those words with which it was connected. Our Lord, you say, declared that nothing which went into a man could defile a man. And pray who ever said it could? Certainly, not the person to whose address you have written what you call an answer. He never said that saccharine matter of any kind, whether eaten with unwashed hands or not, was capable of communicating that defilement which the tradition of the elders making the commandment of God of none effect, had conjured up. He never entered upon the question to my knowledge. Therefore, how any part of that controversy can apply to his argument, is as much above my comprehension, as the curious piece of intelligence with which you immediately follow it up, is too extensive an article for my little faith, viz. "That every thing which went into the body at that time was altogether prepared by slaves." As this is not one of the things which you "*naturally suppose*," but which you roundly assert, ought you not to give the world an opportunity of deriving their knowledge from the same un sullied current of history by which it is transmitted to you? Can you not inform us who were the owners of Martha and her sister Mary? who were the owners of the apostolic fishermen? and why they permitted them to wander about with such an unpopular character as Jesus Christ, without once sending the jumper after them, or setting a price upon their heads, as your friends in the West-Indies often do? When the world is satisfied about these particulars, perhaps the society
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of antiquarians may elect you a member of their order, or the Creolean literati give you a name, and a place in the Mythology of tropical divinity. But should it appear that your information is only the *ipsa dixit* of a vain woman, you have no reason to feel hurt, if your word should cease to be regarded, or be regarded only with suspicion.

The next portion of scripture, which you wrest to suit your own purpose, is of the same nature with the first. Our Lord, being at dinner with a Pharisee, his host "marvelled" that he did not perform the customary ablution. On this occasion he received the following sharp reproof: "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools! did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold all things are clean unto you." Your making the precept general, without presupposing the thing possessed equitably obtained, would make society unbearable. Men might make fortunes by rapine and slaughter, then give alms of such things as they had; *and, according to your exposition*, all would be clean unto them; for Jesus said so in direct and general terms.

The apostles, you say, give similar directions, "Only to let our moderation be known, and that every thing is sanctified by the word of God and prayer." Oh! the adroitness with which you manufacture a text! You are as expert in splicing the fagg ends of different epistles together, as in paring the rough edges from a portion of scripture, which you tear from its connexion. The apostle, indeed, recommends moderation in general terms; but from the mere circumstance of his so speaking, it is impossible he should have in view any particular action of life, the propriety of which was doubted. With respect to the latter clause of your
question,

question, it relates to those abuses which would come to pass in the latter days, through the influence of those who would depart from the faith, and forbid marriage, and the use of meats, not because they were dishonestly obtained, but simply on their own account. Now, in this point of view, nothing is to be refused; but every thing is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. "Meat commendeth us not to God!" Pray, who ever said it did? "*Therefore*"—Not quite so fast with your "*Therefore*." The world must be informed that you are striding over nearly three chapters, and that your friend, "*Therefore*," by whose aid you fill up the chasm, is a creature of your own formation. The text reads thus: "Whatever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no questions, for conscience-sake. For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof. If any of them that believe not, bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go, whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience-sake. But if any man say unto you, this is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not, for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience-sake: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Now, by attending to the sense of the author, we see that the dispute in question was about meat offered to idols, and not about the propriety of purchasing goods fraudulently or violently obtained. Your exposition affects the moral character both of Christ and his apostles; as it represents them appointing receptacles for stolen goods, and encouraging the disciples to gobble down any man's property, provided it was exposed for sale in the public market, even though they were aware that the person with whom they dealt was an habitual thief, and the property they purchased most commonly stolen.

You rest satisfied in the idea, that you have disproved what nobody attempted to establish; that "Abstinence from the sugar-cane is no part of a Christian's duty."

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The author of the address never said it was. He only urges it as a duty, “ To abstain from the use of the sugar-cane till we can have it unconnected with slavery, and unpolluted with blood.” Our abstinence, you say, will do no good, “ The Islands are to declare their independence, and find a vent for their goods in some other market.” But to shew the world that you have not undertaken to give lectures upon a commerce of which you were entirely ignorant, be so kind, next time you write, as to inform us, how the produce of our islands is to find a vent in foreign markets? Already we pay so large a bounty to force it abroad, that were half the quantity of our imported sugar to be re-exported, nearly the whole of the revenue derived from that article would cease. And when we consider, that the bounty is not a new thing, and that even by its assistance our planters were not able to re-export any large quantity of their imported goods, before the disturbances in the French islands—when we recollect that America will soon supply herself with sugar from the maple tree, that the East India Company will in a great measure supply the German market; that Spain, Portugal, Holland, and Denmark, have sugar colonies of their own; that the sugar of Sierra Leona will be driven abroad by an unnatural alien duty; and when we call to mind, that England is almost the only country where rum is used, we would fain know in what sequestered corner of the globe the West Indian is to find a market for the fruits of his oppression, when the disturbances in the French islands shall cease, or when Parliament shall cease to reward his iniquity from the public treasury? Is he to barter them for cat-skins at Nootka Sound? or will the Greenlander receive them in exchange for blubber?

“ But sugar (you continue) is styled a luxury; and the covetous man will readily adopt the language, because, by denying his family an expensive article, he can make a sure saving.” Such paltry slander is as innocent

innocent as its author is contemptible. In the subsequent sentence, indeed, you acquit us of the crime of avarice, by allowing, that although we refuse the West India sugar, we purchase that from the East at an exorbitant price. But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel. We are rescued from the whip, to be chastised with scorpions. We are accused of straining at gnats, while we swallow camels. What is the import of the accusation, I neither know myself, nor have I been able to find any one who could inform me. As there can be no crime in receiving the produce of free labour, such as East India sugar, you must certainly mean, that the people who reject the produce of robbery and murder, indulge themselves in the commission of crimes of deeper dye without remorse. If this is your meaning, either point out your man, and point out his crimes, or else repent you of the sin of bearing false witness against your neighbour. You inform us, that “ No large commercial country, no grand monarchical form of government, ever was, or ever will be, supported without luxuries.” Whether they were or not, I shall not contend, as our question is not, whether we ought to live luxuriously or frugally; but, whether we be justified in transporting men in chains from one country, to be tortured for the gratification of our appetites in another? Should this question be answered in the negative, I ask, why you tempt another to do what you would not do yourself? Why you join a croud, to do what you would not do alone?—Why you reward iniquity by purchasing an article procured by the perpetual accession of fresh crimes? You answer, “ God has left us free—debarring ourselves from the West Indian cane is will-worship, and, like every other instance of voluntary humility, has a tendency to defile the conscience, and darken the understanding.” If the voluntary humility, the worshipping of angels, and the apparent wisdom in the will-worship of human tradition, against which the Colossians were warned, have a tendency to defile the conscience, and darken the understanding,

standing, surely the apparent folly and voluntary arrogance with which you pervert the sacred writings, betray strong symptoms of a conscience already defiled, an understanding already darkened.

With respect to divisions among Christians, they are certainly disagreeable, when they occur : but they must not be averted, by sacrificing the repose of conscience. However, you foretel, that he that eateth not, will judge him that eateth, &c. It is strange, that all through the argument you cannot help talking about *eating* ! Like the miser's cook of Moliere, the only words in your mouth are, *eat, eat, eat*, although your question has no more reference to eating, than it has to riding on horseback ; but relates simply to the propriety or impropriety of *receiving* goods improperly obtained. If the staple commodity of the West Indies had been apparel, instead of food, what scripture would you have perverted then ? As the case is, may we not hope for a text or two in vindication of the use of rum ? Would not our Lord's sacramental invitation, " Drink ye all " of it," and the apostolic declaration, " the spirit " giveth life," when properly tacked together, after your mode, be admirably explicit ?

As to the ruin of trade, and the train of dreadful consequences, that is to follow our abstinence, that is nothing to us. If the produce of the labour of slaves is not equitable property, it is our duty to refuse it ; and our acceptance of it is criminal : or else, why are men punished for receiving stolen goods ?

Before you called your book *An Answer to the Address*, you should have disproved the position, That, " *As the planter has no right to the person of the slave, he can have no right to his labour, or to the produce of it.*" Had you done that, the controversy would have been nearly decided, unless we are to do " a real evil on the " vague supposition that good may come." As to the
state

state of freedom in which you urge God has left us, if it is the liberty of doing actions which tend to the enslaving of others, it looks more like the bondage of iniquity, than the glorious liberty of the children of God.

In your libel on the army you affirm, that “ a soldier is deprived of all the benefit of the laws of his country—that he is an absolute slave,—that he is sold by the wretch who first betrays him,—and that if ever he attempts to emancipate himself (that is, to desert), he is shot like a mad dog.” In short, you conclude your *sublime climax* by saying, that forcing an hundred young men into the army, “ might be as bad as being the remote cause of enslaving an hundred Africans.” That the pay of the army is much too small, and its punishments much too severe, cannot be denied. But that a soldier is deprived of all the benefit of the laws of his country, is one of the grossest falsehoods that ever disgraced the Press. The records of the Old Bailey lamentably prove, that he is allowed trial by jury. And the records of Westminster-hall are not devoid of instances, to shew that a soldier may institute a civil action, even against his officer.

As you tell us, soldiers “ are absolute slaves, and are often sold,” can you not inform us where the sales are kept? I should imagine they must be by *very* private contract, as I never heard of a lot of grenadiers being knocked down by Christie, or any other gentleman of the hammer. With respect to their being shot like mad dogs, for desertion, I think you would find it difficult to produce half a dozen instances in point, for the last twenty years.

As this horrid picture of the British army is shewn by way of extenuation of colonial tyranny, I shall draw such a comparison between them as I am able to do from my own knowledge and observation. The soldier,
before

before he is such, hears where his regiment lies, and the name of his commander; knows the pay, and thinks he can live upon it. He is offered a bounty, and accepts it. He is allowed four days for reflection; if he repents his engagement, he pays twenty shillings, returns the money he has received, and is discharged. But if he likes the service, he goes before a magistrate, swears he was fairly enlisted, that he has received his bounty, that he is a protestant, that he has heard the articles of war read, and that he will be a good soldier. If he is sent to the West Indies (where we must certainly send him, for the sake of comparison), he is first clothed, and provided with bedding; he has full liberty on board the ship which transports him; and when he arrives at his destined station, he is lodged in dry and comfortable barracks; he is well fed, well clad, and his pay continued, not unfrequently with an addition to it from the island. He has very little to do, except the morning exercise; and if he is employed as a mechanic, he receives extra wages. He cannot be punished, but for a crime expressed in the articles of war; and when punished, by the sentence of a court-martial, a surgeon attends, who may remit such part of the punishment as he thinks him unable to bear without injury to his constitution. He may even bring his general to a court-martial, and the evidence of his peers is admitted. When superannuated or disabled, he receives a pension, which, if insufficient for his support, he may resign to the officers of his parish, and they must maintain him.

Would God this were the case with the wretched African. A sad reverse, alas! is fact. Before he was a slave, he tilled his little patch of ground, planted it with yams, or sowed it with rice; and felt a reward within his simple breast, from a consciousness that he was providing for his little family, who contributed their tiny pittance to the honey of the hive, by scaring the feathered plunderers from the ripening crop. A few hours daily labour supplied his every want; the remainder

mainder was devoted to hospitality, and merriment and joy. He welcomed his friends with the easy politeness of nature, seated them on the turf, and was almost instantly at the summit of the stately palm-tree that waved its majestic leaves contiguous to his hut. Thence quick descending, laden with delicious wine, he filled the calabash of each contented guest, whose supple limbs, obedient to his rude *banjay**, began the athletic dance, while the animated chorus of unaffected voices inspired a cheerfulness of which the formal sons of European festivity can form no adequate conception. But, ah! senators have no bowels of compassion. The happiness of Africans must be sacrificed at the shrine of their avaricious policy. They have legalized murder. They have ascertained the quantum of misery it is expedient to inflict. They have dared to set a price upon the heads of innocents, who never did them an injury, who never sought a connection with them, who never even heard of their country, or their colour. Corrupted by their gold, and sanctioned by their authority, the sons of violence are on their way. Their emissaries are sitting in the lurking places of the villages, and lying in wait secretly to catch the poor. They catch our African. A yoke is put upon his neck, and he is goaded to the ships. The price of his blood being agreed upon, he is shackled to another victim of European cruelty, and thrust under deck. The recollection of his country and his friends drives him to despair. He cannot think why he is torn from them, why the wretches who have laden him with chains, are desirous that he should eat; he cannot account for their brutal kindness; he concludes they mean to fatten him, in order to feast upon him at a convenient season. He resolves to circumvent their designs; he refuses food: he is whipt to make him eat; but the indignant firmness

* An instrument somewhat like a guitar. Its use is prohibited in some parts of the West Indies. Perhaps from an idea that it is superfluous in those lands of *superior felicity*.

of his mind is not to be subdued by the lash. The *speculum oris* * is resorted to; a broken tooth gives an opportunity for its introduction; his mouth is forced open, rice is crammed down his throat, and he is compelled to live. He arrives at the West Indies, and is sold. He now depends upon the will of an individual for his all. He is now in a country where all nature conspires against him, where babes are taught to hiss, "that the worst white is better than the best black." He has now no legal protection against his master. He is even under the absolute controul of an hireling, who has no interest in his life. His master's name may be branded in his flesh with hot irons, and all the while he may be allowed the character of a good slave. But should he bend reluctantly to his fate, the horrid cart-whip would make long furrows in his flesh; his lacerated body would be washed with brine or sea-water; he might even be tortured with melted wax, or boiling fyrup; and any white man might kill him with impunity, as the united testimony of a thousand of his peers would not be considered as evidence by a West India court of *injustice*. When superannuated, he may be deserted by the wretch who has wasted the vigour of his youth; and when perishing with hunger, he may be insulted, by being told that he is free.

After all your boasted christianity, you at last unmask, and tell us, "Charity *should* begin at home." *Your* charity, my good Lady, may *begin* at home, and *end* at home, and *stay at home* for ever. The world will be no loser. But genuine charity prompts its possessor to embrace ten thousand worlds, then melts him into tears, because he can grasp no more.

You seriously caution us against "affecting too much pity for strangers, and being too clamorous against West India avarice, cruelty, and oppression," merely because

* An instrument with which they force open the mouths of such slaves as refuse to eat.

we have abuses at home. That we *have* abuses at home, nobody will deny. But, that either the author of the Address, or any of his profelytes, “applaud or approve the enslaving of tens of thousands of our brethren, merely on the doctrine of necessity,” is an explosion of that arrogance which you palm upon the world instead of argument.

That we shall quietly go to sleep, till the lordly Creole himself shall deign to proclaim “liberty to the captive,” is one of those pleasing reveries I cannot advise you to indulge.

As Britons, we are jealous lest the chains which are forged for Africans, at the extremities of the empire, should be rivetted on our necks at its centre.

As men, who feel the indignity offered to our species, by the continuance of the slave trade *in the very teeth of evidence*, we should be ashamed to act the part of children, and accept a paltry junket as a succedaneum for that justice which we demand for the whole human race.

As Christians, we conceive there is such a thing as moral principle, and that the Holy Scriptures, taken in their obvious, natural sense, are to be the rule of our conduct. We find it an universal maxim of the New Testament, that Christians ought to have “no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them.” We conceive, that such actions as are contrary to the spirit of the gospel, *are* works of darkness. We think that detaining just men in slavery, is contrary to the spirit of the gospel. Therefore, we ought to reprove it: and this we do not to the utmost of our power, unless we refrain from it ourselves—reprimand it in others—avoid any act which we think may induce another to pursue it—reject the pleasures and profits which immediately accrue from it—and use every lawful means to prevent it.

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By way of extreme unctio궛 to your expiring cause, you suggest the idea, that our combination looks very much like persecution; that the planters will think themselves persecuted.

What Guinea pirates or West India planters may say or think, can be of very little importance to honest, disinterested men. "They have had their good things;" and the poor victims of their avarice, "their evil things." It is time *they* should be comforted, even though their oppressors should be tormented.

When Mr. Palmer's plan for conveying the mail was first agitated, you did not call *that* doing evil, that good might come, (at least not from the press.) You did not then urge, that many children were employed in driving, and many mechanics in constructing the wretched wheelbarrows by which letters were then conveyed. You did not even think of the poor innkeepers, coachmasters, and others, who had employed large capitals in travelling accommodations. Much less did you think of calling that tradesman a persecutor who refused to negotiate a bill, or to purchase a casket of diamonds, which had been stolen from a public conveyance. You never suggested the argument, that, "all the means and manner of carrying on business belonged to the man himself, and was what his customers had nothing to do with." Why, then, is our abstinence from the produce of slavery called persecution? Is it less a crime to rob a man of liberty than of property? or, are the generality of persons concerned in the slave-trade, more honourable characters than the generality of highwaymen?

I shall conclude this letter by confirming, as far as the influence of my word extends, the general tenor of the evidence laid before the House of Commons on colonial slavery. I know one of the persons, who is mentioned to have committed some acts of atrocity; and, from her general character, I should conceive them true.

I have

I have myself seen a negro whipt, at the mandate of a drunken tyrant, till he could not sit down, ignorant of the crime of which he was accused, and which, it afterwards turned out, he had not committed.

I have seen a white woman superintend the punishment of one of her own sex, provided with a horse-whip, for the purpose of beating the negro whipper when he did not strike hard enough.

I have been waited upon, at the house of a lady in Antigua, by a female slave in a state of nature.

I have heard an overseer declare, that the best mode of seasoning a negro, is to give him nine-and-thirty lashes soon after he comes upon an estate, to make him know where he is. I have heard the same wretch boast, that once, he vexed his driver, by compelling him to flog the female with whom he cohabited.

I have seen, in most of our islands, crouds of negroes, half naked, and apparently half starved, generally disfigured by the cart-whip, and not unfrequently in chains.

I have seen, with indignation, the little pittance of their Sunday's labour wrested from their hands by the indigent whites; and only such a price paid for it as the purchaser thought proper to affix.

I have known many instances of their being sent from one island to another, merely for the convenience of their masters. I have, on these occasions, seen the dearest relatives realize the agonies of despair, from a consciousness that they were to meet no more.

I have seen them lingering in a dungeon for the insolvency of their masters.

I have

I have known a miserable, deserted Lazarus insulted by his owner, only for asking for a morsel of bread.

I do not mean to deny, that I have known negroes contented and happy. When their kind fate places them as domestics under the roof of a humane master, it is often the case. These solitary instances are made the most of by the advocates for slavery. But when I recollect the severity I have seen practised by men of the greatest humanity, in paroxysms of rage or intoxication—when I reflect, that, in case of insolvency, a slave may lie for weeks in a dungeon, and afterwards take his chance for a good master at a public auction—I cannot conceive that a few exceptions prove any thing against the general misery of colonial slavery.

For offences not cognizable by individuals, the code of laws for the punishment of slaves proves more effectually than a thousand arguments, that the West Indians are a sanguinary, brutal, vindictive race. For striking a white man, the hand of a slave is cut off. For insurrection, almost all our islands abound with instances of their being *gibbeted, and even roasted alive..*

In Christmas, 1781, at Antigua, two slaves killed a scoundrel who had deprived them of their holidays, and otherwise ill treated them. The hand of the principal was chopped off, before he was put to death.

If ever such savage inhumanity was necessary, it was inflicted with a very bad grace, in a country where white men had frequently been punished with imprisonment and a small fine, for the murder of negroes. In vain do we hope for individual reformation in the West Indies. It is not to be expected in a country where an exertion of law is an exertion of brutality. Nor should it excite our surprise, when we behold that latent spark of liberty which had been stifled, but not
extin-

extinguished, burst into a devouring flame, and prompt an injured race to break their chains promiscuously upon the heads of the innocent and the guilty. If we would radically cure these evils, let us teach governments humanity. Let us recover *our* dignity, and Africans will recover *their* liberty. Let us lose sight of the interest of *tyrants*, and *not* continue to be cannibals from motives of compassion.

Let our united efforts bespeak the sincerity of our souls, and let us hail the soft effulgence of that dawn of liberty, which in despite of hell, shall rise to meridian splendour, and, with undiminished blaze, dispense its genial influence from pole to pole, till time shall be no more.

I am,

Madam,

Yours, &c.

RICHARD HILLIER.

SURRY,
November 14th, 1791.

F I N I S.





