

Immediate, not Gradual Abolition - 1824

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IMMEDIATE,

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ABOLITION;

OR,

AN INQUIRY

INTO THE SHORTEST, SAFEST, AND MOST EFFECTUAL
MEANS OF GETTING RID OF

WEST INDIAN SLAVERY.

LONDON:

SOLD BY

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From the gift of Henry L. Shattuck

IMMEDIATE,
NOT GRADUAL
ABOLITION,

&c. &c. &c.

IT is now seventeen years since the *Slave Trade* was abolished by the Government of this country—but *Slavery* is still perpetuated in our West India colonies, and the horrors of the *Slave Trade* are aggravated rather than mitigated. By making it felony for British subjects to be concerned in that inhuman traffic, England has only transferred her share of it to other countries. She has, indeed, by negotiation and remonstrance, endeavoured to persuade them to follow her example.—But has she succeeded?—How should she, whilst there is so little consistency in her conduct? Who will listen to her pathetic declamations on the injustice and cruelty of the *Slave Trade*—whilst she rivets the chains upon her own slaves, and subjects them to all the injustice and cruelty which she so eloquently deplors when her own interest is no longer at stake? Before we can have any rational hope of prevailing on our guilty neighbours to abandon this atrocious commerce—to relinquish the gain of oppression,—the wealth obtained by rapine and violence,—by the deep groans, the bitter anguish of our unoffending fellow creatures;—we must purge ourselves from these pollutions;—we must break the iron yoke from off the neck of *our own slaves*,—and let the wretched captives in our own islands go free. Then, and not till then, we shall speak to the surrounding nations with the *all-commanding eloquence of sincerity and truth*,—and our persuasions will be backed by the *irresistible argument of consistent example*. But to invite others to be just and merciful whilst we grasp in our own hands the rod of oppression,—to solicit others to relinquish the wages of

iniquity whilst we are putting them into our own pockets—what is it but cant and hypocrisy? Do such preachers of justice and mercy ever make converts? On the contrary, do they not render themselves ridiculous and contemptible?

But let us, *individually*, bring this great question closely home to our own bosoms. We that hear, and read, and approve, and applaud the powerful appeals, the irrefragable arguments against the Slave Trade, and against slavery,—are we *ourselves* sincere, or hypocritical? Are we the true friends of justice, or do we only cant about it?—To which party do we really belong?—to the friends of emancipation, or of perpetual slavery? Every individual belongs to one party or the other; not speculatively, or professionally merely, but practically. The perpetuation of slavery in our West India colonies, is not an abstract question, to be settled between the Government and the Planters,—it is a question in which we are *all* implicated;—we are all guilty,—(with shame and compunction let us admit the opprobrious truth) of supporting and perpetuating slavery. The West Indian planter and the people of this country, stand in the same moral relation to each other, as the thief and the receiver of stolen goods. The planter refuses to set his wretched captive at liberty,—treats him as a beast of burden,—compels his reluctant unremunerated labour under the lash of the cart whip,—why?—because WE furnish the stimulant to all this injustice, rapacity, and cruelty,—by PURCHASING ITS PRODUCE. Heretofore, it may have been thoughtlessly and unconsciously,—but now this palliative is removed;—the veil of ignorance is rent aside;—the whole nation must now divide itself into the *active supporters*, and the *active opposers* of slavery;—there is no longer any ground for a neutral party to stand upon.

The state of slavery, in our West Indian islands, is now become notorious;—*the secret is out*;—the justice and humanity, the *veracity* also, of slave owners,—is exactly ascertained;—the credit due to their assertions, that their slaves are better fed, better clothed,—are more comfortable, more *happy* than our English peasantry, is now universally understood. The tricks and impostures practised by the colonial assemblies, to hoodwink the people,—to humbug the Government,—and to bamboozle the *saints* (as the friends of emancipation are scornfully termed)—have all been detected—and the cry of the nation has been raised, from one end to the other, against this complicated system of knavery and imposture,—of intolerable oppression, of relentless and savage barbarity.

But is all this knowledge to end in exclamations, in petitions, and remonstrances?—Is there nothing to be *done*, as well as said? Are there no tests to prove our sincerity,—no sacrifices to be offered in confirmation of our zeal?—Yes, there is *one*,—

(but it is in itself so small and insignificant that it seems almost burlesque to dignify it with the name of sacrifice)—it is ABSTINENCE FROM THE USE OF WEST INDIAN PRODUCTIONS, *sugar*, especially, in the cultivation of which slave labour is chiefly occupied. Small, however, and insignificant as the sacrifice may appear,—it would, at once, give the death blow to West Indian slavery. When there was no longer a market for the productions of *slave labour*, then, and *not till then*, will the slaves be emancipated.

Many had recourse to this expedient about thirty years ago, when the public attention was so generally roused to the enormities of the Slave Trade. But when the trade was abolished by the British legislature, it was too readily concluded that the abolition of slavery, in the British dominions, would have been an inevitable consequence, this species of abstinence was therefore unhappily discontinued.

“ But (it will be objected) if there be no market for West Indian produce, the West Indian proprietors will be ruined, and the slaves, instead of being benefited, will perish by famine.” Not so,—the West Indian proprietors understand their own interest better. The market though shut to the productions of *slave labour*, would still be open to the productions of *free labour*,—and the planters are not such devoted worshippers of slavery as to make a voluntary sacrifice of their own interests upon her altar;—they will not doom the soil to perpetual barrenness rather than suffer it to be cultivated by free men. It has been abundantly proved that voluntary labour is more productive,—more advantageous to the employer than compulsory labour. The experiments of the venerable and philanthropic Joshua Steele have established the fact beyond all doubt:—But the planter shuts his eyes to such facts, though clear and evident as the sun at noon day. None are so blind as those who *will* not see. The conviction then must be *forced* upon these infatuated men. It is often asserted, that slavery is too deeply rooted an evil to be eradicated by the exertions of any principle less potent and active than *self interest*—if so, the resolution to abstain from West Indian produce, would bring this potent and active principle into the fullest operation,—would *compel* the planter to set his slaves at liberty.*

But were such a measure to be ultimately injurious to the interest of the planter—that consideration ought not to weigh a feather in the scale against emancipation. The slave has a *right* to his liberty, a right which it is a crime to withhold—let the consequences to the planters be what they may. If I have been deprived of my rightful inheritance, and the usurper,

* It has been ascertained that the abstinence of *one tenth* of the inhabitants of this country from West Indian sugar would abolish West Indian slavery.

because he has long kept possession, asserts his *right* to the property of which he has defrauded me; are my just claims to it at all weakened by the boldness of his pretensions, or by the plea that restitution would impoverish and involve him in ruin? And to what inheritance, or birth-right, can any mortal have pretensions so just, (until forfeited by crime) as to liberty? What injustice and rapacity can be compared to that which defrauds a man of his best earthly inheritance,—tears him from his dearest connexions, and condemns him and his posterity to the degradation and misery of interminable slavery?

In the great question of emancipation, the interests of *two* parties are said to be involved,—the interest of the slave and that of the planter. But it cannot for a moment be imagined that these two interests have an equal right to be consulted, without confounding all moral distinctions, all difference between real and pretended, between substantial and assumed claims. With the interest of the planters, the question of emancipation, has (properly speaking) nothing to do. The right of the slave, and the interest of the planter, are distinct questions; they belong to separate departments, to different provinces of consideration. If the liberty of the slave can be secured not only without injury but with advantage to the planter, so much the better, certainly;—but still the liberation of the slave ought ever to be regarded as an independent object; and if it be deferred till the planter is sufficiently alive to his own interest to co-operate in the measure, we may for ever despair of its accomplishment. The cause of emancipation has been long and ably advocated. Reason and eloquence, persuasion and argument have been powerfully exerted; experiments have been fairly made,—facts broadly stated in proof of the impolicy as well as iniquity of slavery,—to little purpose; even the *hope* of its extinction, with the concurrence of the planter, or by any enactment of the colonial, or British legislature, is still seen in very remote perspective,—so remote, that the heart sickens at the cheerless prospect. All that zeal and talent could display in the way of argument, has been exerted in vain. All that an accumulated mass of indubitable evidence could effect in the way of conviction, has been brought to no effect.

It is high time, then, to resort to other measures,—to ways and means more summary and effectual. Too much time has already been lost in declamation and argument,—in petitions and remonstrances against *British* slavery. The cause of emancipation calls for something more decisive, more efficient than words. It calls upon the real friends of the poor degraded and oppressed African to bind themselves by a solemn engagement, an irrevocable vow, to participate no longer in the crime of keeping him in bondage. It calls upon them to “wash their

own hands in innocency ;"—to abjure for ever the miserable hypocrisy of pretending to commiserate the slave, whilst, by purchasing the productions of his labour they *bribe* his master to keep him in slavery. The great Apostle of the gentiles declared, that he would "eat no flesh whilst the world stood, rather than make his Brother to offend." Do you make a similar resolution respecting West Indian produce. Let your resolution be made conscientiously, and kept inviolably ;—let no plausible arguments which may be urged against it from without,—no solicitations of appetite from within, move you from your purpose,—and in the course of a few months, slavery in the British dominions will be annihilated.

"Yes, (it may be said) if *all* would unite in such a resolution,—but what can the abstinence of a few individuals, or a few families do, towards the accomplishment of so vast an object ?"—It can do wonders. Great effects often result from small beginnings. Your resolution will influence that of your friends and neighbours ;—each of them will, in like manner, influence their friends and neighbours ;—the example will spread from house to house,—from city to city,—till, *among those who have any claim to humanity*, there will be but one heart, and one mind,—one resolution,—one uniform practice. Thus, *by means the most simple and easy, would West Indian slavery be most safely and speedily abolished.*

"But, (it will be objected) it is not an *immediate*, but a *gradual* emancipation, which the most enlightened and judicious friends of humanity call for, as a measure best calculated, in their judgment, to promote the real interests of the *slave*, as well as his master ; the former, not being in a condition to make a right use of his freedom, were it suddenly restored to him." This, it must be admitted, appears not only the general, but almost universal sentiment of the abolitionists ;—to oppose it therefore, may seem a most presumptuous, as well as hopeless attempt. But truth and justice are stubborn and inflexible ;—they yield neither to numbers or authority.

The history of emancipation in St. Domingo, and of the conduct of the emancipated slaves for thirty years subsequent to that event (as detailed in Clarkson's admirable pamphlet, on the necessity of improving the condition of our West Indian slaves,) is a complete refutation of all the elaborate arguments which have been artfully advanced to discredit the design of *immediate* emancipation. No instance has been recorded in these important annals, of the emancipated slaves (not the *gradually*, but the *immediately* emancipated slaves) having abused their freedom. On the contrary, it is frequently asserted in the course of the narrative, that the negroes continued to work upon all the plantations as quietly as before emancipation. Through the whole of Clarkson's diligent and candid investigations of

the conduct of emancipated slaves, comprising a body of more than 500,000 persons,—under a great variety of circumstances,—a considerable proportion of whom had been suddenly emancipated—*with all the vicious habits of slavery upon them*; many of them *accustomed to the use of arms*; he has not, throughout this vast mass of emancipated slaves, found a *single instance of bad behaviour*, not even a refusal to work, or of disobedience to orders; much less, had he heard of frightful massacres, or of revenge for past injuries, even when they had it amply in their power. Well might this benevolent and indefatigable abolitionist arrive at the conclusion, “that emancipation, (why did he not say *immediate* emancipation?) was not only practicable, but practicable without danger.” All the frightful massacres and conflagrations which took place in St. Domingo, in 1791 and 1792, *occurred during the days of slavery*. They originated too, not with the slaves, but with the white and coloured planters,—between the royalists, and the revolutionists, who, for purposes of mutual vengeance, called in the aid of the slaves. Colonel Malenfant, in his history of the emancipation, written during his residence in St. Domingo, *ridicules the notion that the negroes would not work without compulsion*,—and asserts, that in one plantation, more immediately under his own observation, on which more than four hundred negroes were employed, *not one in the number refused to work after their emancipation*.

In the face of such a body of evidence, the detaining our West Indian slaves in bondage, is a continued acting of the same atrocious injustice which first kidnapped and tore them from their kindred and native soil, and robbed them of that sacred unalienable right which no considerations, how plausible soever, can justify the withholding. We have no right, on any pretext of expediency or pretended humanity, to say—“because you have been made a slave, and thereby degraded and debased,—therefore, I will continue to hold you in bondage until you have acquired a capacity to make a right use of your liberty.” As well might you say to a poor wretch, gasping and languishing in a pest house, “here will I keep you, till I have given you a capacity for the enjoyment of pure air.”

You admit, that the *vices* of the slave, as well as his miseries,—his intellectual and moral, as well as corporeal degradation are consequent on his slavery;—remove the cause then, and the effect will cease. Give the slave his liberty,—in the sacred name of justice, give it him at once. Whilst you hold him in bondage, he will profit little from your plans of amelioration. He has not, by all his complicated injuries and debasements, been disinherited of his *sagacity*;—this will teach him to give no credit to your admonitory lessons—your Christian instructions will be lost upon him, so long as he both knows and feels that his instructors are grossly violating their own lessons.

The enemies of slavery have hitherto ruined their cause by the senseless cry of *gradual* emancipation. It is marvellous that the *wise* and the *good* should have suffered themselves to have been imposed upon by this wily artifice of the slave holder,—for with him must the project of gradual emancipation have first originated. The slave holder knew very well, that his prey would be secure, so long as the abolitionists could be cajoled into a demand for *gradual* instead of *immediate* abolition. He knew very well, that the contemplation of a *gradual* emancipation, would beget a *gradual indifference to emancipation itself*. He knew very well, that even the *wise* and the *good*, may, by habit and familiarity, be brought to endure and tolerate almost any thing. He had caught the poet's idea, that—

“Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,
 “As to be hated, need but to be seen;
 “But, seen too oft, familiar with her face,
 “We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

He caught the idea, and knew how to turn it to advantage.—He knew very well, that the faithful delineation of the horrors of West Indian slavery, would produce such a general insurrection of sympathetic and indignant feeling; such abhorrence of the oppressor, such compassion for the oppressed, as must soon have been fatal to the whole system. He knew very well, that a strong moral fermentation had begun, which, had it gone forward, must soon have purified the nation from this foulest of its corruptions;—that the cries of the people for emancipation, would have been too unanimous, and too importunate for the Government to resist, and that slavery would, long ago, have been exterminated throughout the British dominions. Our example might have spread from kingdom to kingdom,—from continent to continent,—and the slave trade, and slavery, might, by this time, have been abolished—all the world over:—“A sacrifice of a sweet savour,” might have ascended to the Great Parent of the Universe;—“His kingdom might have come, and his will (thus far) have been done on earth, as it is in Heaven.”

But this GRADUAL ABOLITION, has been the grand marplot of human virtue and happiness;—the very master-piece of satanic policy. By converting the cry for *immediate*, into *gradual* emancipation, the prince of slave holders, “transformed himself, with astonishing dexterity, into an angel of light,”—and thereby—“deceived the very elect.”—He saw very clearly, that if public justice and humanity, especially, if *Christian* justice and humanity, could be brought to demand only a *gradual* extermination of the enormities of the slave system;—if they could be brought to *acquiesce*, but for one year, or for one month, in the slavery of our African brother,—in robbing

him of all the rights of humanity,—and degrading him to a level with the brutes;—that then, they could imperceptibly be brought to acquiesce in all this for an unlimited duration. He saw, very clearly, that the time for the extermination of slavery, was precisely that, when its horrid impiety and enormity were *first distinctly known and strongly felt*. He knew, that every moment's unnecessary delay, between the discovery of an imperious duty, and the setting earnestly about its accomplishment, was dangerous, if not fatal to success. He knew, that strong excitement, was necessary to strong effort;—that intense feeling was necessary to stimulate intense exertion;—that, as strong excitement, and intense feeling are generally transient, in proportion to their strength and intensity,—the most effectual way of crushing a great and virtuous enterprize,—was to gain time,—to defer it to “a more convenient season,” when the zeal and ardour of the first convictions of duty had subsided;—when our sympathies had become languid;—when considerations of the difficulties and hazards of the enterprize, the solicitations of ease and indulgence should have chilled the warm glow of humanity,—quenched the fervid heroism of virtue;—when familiarity with relations of violence and outrage, crimes and miseries, should have abated the horror of their first impression, and, at length induced indifference.

The father of lies, the grand artificer of fraud and imposture, transformed himself therefore, on this occasion, pre-eminently, “into an angel of light”—and deceived, not the unwary only, the unsuspecting multitude,—but the wise and the good, by the plausibility, the apparent force, the justice, and above all; by the *humanity* of the arguments propounded for *gradual* emancipation. He, is the subtlest of all reasoners, the most ingenious of all sophists, the most eloquent of all declaimers.—He, above all other advocates, “can make the worst appear the better argument;” can, most effectually pervert the judgment and blind the understanding,—whilst they seem to be most enlightened and rectified. Thus, by a train of most exquisite reasoning, has he brought the abolitionists to the conclusion,—that the interest of the poor, degraded, and oppressed *slave*, as well as that of his master, will be best secured by his *remaining in slavery*. It has indeed, been proposed to mitigate, in some degree, the miseries of his interminable bondage, but the blessings of *emancipation*, according to the propositions of the abolitionists in the last session of Parliament, were to be reserved for his *posterity* alone,—and every idea of *immediate* emancipation is still represented, not only as impolitic, enthusiastic and visionary, but as highly injurious to the slave himself,—and a train of supposed apt illustrations is continually at hand, to expose the absurdity of such a project. “Who (it is asked) would place a sumptuous banquet before a half-famished

wretch, whilst his powers of digestion were so feeble that it would be fatal to partake of it?—Who would bring a body benumbed and half frozen with cold, into sudden contact with fervid heat? Who would take a poor captive from his dungeon, where he had been immured whole years, in total darkness, and bring him at once into the dazzling light of a meridian sun? No one, in his senses, certainly. All these transitions from famine to plenty,—from cold to heat,—from darkness to light, must be gradual in order to be salutary. But must it therefore follow, by any inductions of common sense, that emancipation out of the gripe of a robber or an assassin,—out of the jaws of a shark or a tiger, must be gradual? Must, it, therefore, follow, that the wretched victim of slavery must always remain in slavery?—that emancipation must be so gradual, that the blessings of freedom shall never be tasted by him who has endured all the curses of slavery, but be reserved for his posterity alone?

There is something unnatural, something revolting to the common sense of justice, in reserving all the sweets of freedom for those who have never tasted the bitter cup of bondage,—in dooming those who have once been compelled to drink it, to drain it to the very dregs. Common equity demands that relief should be administered first to those who have suffered most;—that the healing balm of mercy should be imparted first to those who have smarted most under the rod of oppression: that those who have borne the galling yoke of slavery, should first experience the blessings of liberty. The cause of emancipation loses more than half its interest, when the public sympathy is diverted from its natural channel,—turned from the *living* victims of colonial bondage to their unborn progeny.

It is utterly astonishing, with such an object as West Indian slavery before us, rendered palpable, in all its horrors, almost to our very senses, by a multitude of indubitable facts, collected from various sources of the highest authority, all uniting in the same appalling evidence;—with the sight of our fellow-creatures in bondage so rigorous,—in moral and physical degradation so abject;—under a tyranny so arbitrary, wanton and barbarous;—it is utterly astonishing, that our compassion and sympathy should be so timid and calculating,—so slow and cautious.

Under the contemplation of *individual* suffering, comparatively trifling, both in nature and duration, our compassion is prompt and quick in its movements,—our exertions, spontaneous and instinctive;—we go the shortest way to work, in effecting the relief of the sufferer. But, in emancipating *eight hundred thousand* of our fellow creatures and fellow subjects from a worse than Egyptian bondage, we advance towards the object, by a route, the most indirect and circuitous; we petition Parliament, year after year, for *gradual* emancipation:—to what purpose?

Are we gaining or losing ground by these delays? Are we approaching nearer or receding farther from the attainment of our object? The latter, it is too evident, is, and must be the case. The evil principle is more subtle and active in its various operations, than the good principle. The advocates of slavery, are more alert and successful in insinuating into the public mind, doubts and fears, coldness and apathy on the subject of emancipation, than the abolitionists are in counteracting such hostile influence;—and the desertions from the anti-slavery standard in point of zeal and activity, if not in numbers, since the agitation of the question in Parliament last year, are doubtless very considerable.

Should the numerous petitions to Parliament be ultimately successful;—should [the prayer for gradual emancipation be granted; still, how vague and indefinite would be the benefit resulting from such success. Should some specific time be appointed by government, for the final extinction of colonial slavery;—that period, we have been informed from high authority, will not be an early one. And who can calculate the tears and groans, the anguish and despair;—the tortures and outrages which may be added, during the term of that protracted interval, to the enormous mass of injuries already sustained by the victims of West Indian bondage? Who can calculate the aggravated accumulation of guilt which may be incurred by its active agents, its interested abettors and supporters? Why then, in the name of humanity, of common sense, and common honesty, do we petition Parliament, year after year, for a gradual abolition of this horrid system,—this complication of crime and misery? Why petition Parliament *at all*, to do that for us, which, were they ever so well disposed, we can do more speedily and more effectually for ourselves?

It is no marvel that *slave holders*, should cry out against immediate emancipation, as they have done against all propositions for softening the rigors of colonial slavery. "*Insurrection of all the blacks, —massacre of all the whites.*"—are the bug-bears which have been constantly conjured up, to deter the British Parliament from all interference between the master and his slave. The panic was the same, the outcry just as violent, when an attempt was made about forty years ago, to abate the horrors of the middle passage, by admitting a little more air into the suffocating and pestilent holds of the slave ships; and a noble duke, besought Parliament *not to meddle with the alarming question*.* Confident predictions, from this quarter, of rebellion and bloodshed, have, almost uniformly followed every proposition to restrain the power of the oppressor and to mitigate the sufferings of the oppressed.

See the Debate on this subject in 1823.

It is therefore no wonder, that West Indian proprietors, and slave holders, should exclaim against immediate emancipation; that they should tell us, the slaves are so *depraved* as well as degraded, as to be utterly incapacitated for the right use of freedom;—that emancipation, instead of leading them into habits of sober contented industry, would be inevitably followed by idleness, pillage, and all sorts of enormities;—in short, *that they would rise in a mass, and massacre all the white inhabitants of the islands.*

That *slave holders* should say, and really believe all this, is perfectly natural;—it is no wonder at all that they should be full of the most groundless suspicions and terrors;—for tyrants are the greatest of all cowards.—“The wicked fleeth when no man pursueth;”—he is terrified at shadows,—and shudders at the spectres of his own guilty imagination.

But that the *abolitionists* should have caught the infection,—should be panic-struck;—that the friends of humanity,—the wise and the good—should be diverted from their purpose by such visionary apprehensions;—that they should “fear where no fear is;”—should swallow the bait, so manifestly laid to draw them aside from their great object;—that they should be so credulous, so easily imposed upon—is marvellous.

The simple enquiry, what is meant by emancipation? might have dissipated at once all these terrible spectres of rapine and murder. Does emancipation from slavery imply emancipation from law? Does emancipation from lawless tyranny,—from compulsory unremunerated labour, under the lash of the cart whip, imply emancipation from all responsibility and moral restraint? Were slavery in the British colonies extinguished,—the same laws which restrain and punish crime in the *white* population, would still restrain and punish crime in the *black* population. The danger arising from inequality of numbers would be more than counteracted by the wealth, influence, and the armed force, possessed by the former. But independent of such considerations, the oppressed and miserable, corrupt as is human nature, do not naturally become savage and revengeful when their oppressions and miseries are removed. As long as a human being is bought and sold,—regarded as goods and chattels,—compelled to labour without wages,—branded, chained, and flogged at the caprice of his owner; he will, of necessity, as long as the feeling of pain,—the sense of degradation and injury remain, he will, unless he have the spirit of a Christian martyr, be vindictive and revengeful. “Oppression (it is said) will make (even) a wise man, mad.” But will the liberated captive, when the iron yoke of slavery is broken;—when his heavy burdens are unbound,—his bleeding wounds healed, his broken heart bound up; will he then scatter vengeance and destruction around him?

Should the wretched African find the moment for *breaking his own chains,—and asserting his own freedom,*—he may well be expected to take terrible vengeance,—to push the law of retaliation to its utmost extreme. But, when presented with his freedom,—when the sacred rights of humanity are restored to him, would that be the moment for rage, for revenge and murder? To *polished* and *Christianized* Europeans, such abuses of liberty may appear natural and inevitable, since their own history abounds with them. But the history of negro emancipation abundantly proves that no such consequences are to be apprehended from the poor *uncultivated* and *despised* African.

“But, to demand *immediate* emancipation, however safe, however just and desirable in itself, would (we are told) be most *impolitic*,—for it would never be granted;—by striving to obtain too much, you would lose all. You must go cautiously and gradually to work. A very powerful interest and a very powerful influence are against you. You must try to conciliate instead of provoke the West Indian planters;—to convince them that their own interest is concerned in the better treatment and gradual emancipation of their slaves, or your object will never be accomplished.”

But you will strive and labour in vain;—you will reason, however eloquently, however forcibly, in the ears of the “deaf adder.” The moral and rational perceptions of the *slave holder*, are still more perverted than those of the slave;—oppression, is more debasing and injurious to the intellect of the oppressor, than that of the oppressed. The gains of unrighteousness,—familiarity with injustice and cruelty, have rendered the slave holder, more obstinately, more incurably blind and inaccessible to reason, than the slave. And what justice or restitution would there be in the world, were unlawful possessions never to be reclaimed till there was a disposition in the possessor *voluntarily* to relinquish them,—till he was convinced that it was his *interest* to part with them?

The interests and the prejudices of the West Indian planters, have occupied much too prominent a place in the discussion of this great question. The abolitionists have shewn a great deal too much politeness and accommodation towards these gentlemen. With reference to them, the question is said, to be a very *delicate* one. (Was ever the word delicacy so preposterously misapplied?)—It is said, to be beset with difficulties and dangers.—Yes, the parties interested,—*criminally* interested, protest that the difficulties are insurmountable,—the dangers tremendous. But those difficulties and dangers have been proved to be visionary and futile, the offspring of idle, or of hypocritical fears. A little *temporary* pecuniary loss, would be the mighty amount of all the calamities which emancipation

would entail upon its virulent and infuriated opposers.* And is that a consideration to stand in competition with the liberation of *eight hundred thousand* of our fellow creatures from the heavy yoke of slavery? Must hundreds of thousands of human beings continue to be disinherited of those inherent rights of humanity, without which, life becomes a curse, instead of a blessing; must they continue to be roused and stimulated to uncompensated labour, night as well as day, during a great part of the year, by the impulse of the cart whip, that a few *noble lords* and *honourable gentlemen* may experience no privation of expensive luxury,—no contraction of profuse expenditure,—no curtailment of state and equipage? Must the scale in which is placed the just claims, the sacred rights of *eight hundred thousand British subjects*, be made to kick the beam, when weighed in the balance against pretensions so comparatively light and frivolous?

Among the West Indian proprietors, there are doubtless, individuals of high character and respectability, whose education and circumstances may, nevertheless, disqualify them from taking a strictly impartial view of colonial slavery. Such, of course, must be exempt from the just odium,—the reprobation, which belongs to the general body, as far as they have rendered their own character notorious by their own declarations,—by the speeches they have published, and the decrees they have issued;—by the virulent abuse, the rage and calumny which they have heaped upon the abolitionists;—by the alternations of fawning servility and insolent threatening, with which they at one time “prostrate themselves at the foot of the throne;”—at another, protest, in the tone of defiance, not to say rebellion, against British interference with colonial legislation. Towards these gentlemen, there has been extended a great deal too much delicacy and tenderness. They are *culprits*, in the strictest sense of the word,—and as such, they ought to be regarded, notwithstanding their rank and consequence, by every honest impartial moralist. They have received too long, the gains of oppression;—too long have they fattened on the spoils of humanity.

It matters not at all, how, or when, the planter acquired his pretended right to the slave;—whether by violence or robbery,—by purchase or by inheritance. His claim always was, and always will be, ill-founded, because it is opposed to nature, to reason, and to religion. It is also illegal, as far as legality has any foundation of justice, divine or human, to rest upon. His plea for protection against the designs of the abolitionists, on the ground that his property has been embarked in this nefari-

* The account of the London Meeting of West Indian Planters, which took place in February last, perfectly justifies the application of these epithets.

ous speculation, on the faith of Parliament,—in the confidence that no change would be effected in the laws which sanction the enormous injustice and wickedness of slavery, is childish and futile. Are not commercial speculations of every kind, subject to perpetual vicissitudes and revolutions? Are not human laws perpetually undergoing new modifications and changes in accommodation to the ever-varying circumstances of the times, —to increasing light and civilization? It is absurd to imagine that the progress of humanity, of moral and political improvement, is to be arrested, because some individual perquisites, derived from institutions of brutal ignorance and barbarism, would be curtailed. A great deal more reasonably might the industrious artizan, whose daily subsistence depends on his daily labour,—whose only property is his labour—and who, in many cases, has no means, like the West Indian capitalist, of transferring it from one channel to another;—with a great deal more reason might he exclaim and cry out for protection against all mechanical improvements, which diminish labour, which deprive thousands of the labouring classes of their wonted resources, and drive them to beggary.

But if the West Indian gentlemen fail to obtain *protection* against the designs of the abolitionists, then, they demand *compensation*, in the event of the emancipation of their slaves, to the immense amount of *sixty four millions*. And is *compensation* demanded in no other quarter?—or, if not demanded, is it no where else due? If compensation be demanded as an act of justice to the slave holder, in the event of the liberation of his slaves;—let justice take her free, impartial course;—let compensation be made in the first instance, where it is most due;—let compensation be first made to the *slave*, for his long years of uncompensated labour, degradation and suffering. It is in *this* quarter, that justice cries aloud for *compensation*,—and if our attention is turned, but for a moment, to these two substantial and well authenticated claims,—the demands of the *slave holder*; (even had they been couched in terms less arrogant and insulting,) will become not a little questionable.

Experience has already sufficiently evinced the fallacy of the notion, of the superior policy of aiming at gradual, instead of immediate emancipation, on the ground of its meeting with less opposition; for the planters have shewn themselves just as much enraged at the idea of *gradual*, as of immediate emancipation. They appear indeed, either incapable of perceiving, or determined to confound all distinction between them;—for, in the bitterness of their invectives, they accuse the *gradual* abolitionists of endeavouring to bring upon their heads all the calamities and destruction which they formerly deprecated as the inevitable consequence of *immediate* emancipation.

On this great question, the spirit of accommodation and con-

ciliation has been a spirit of delusion. The abolitionists have lost, rather than gained ground by it;—their cause has been weakened, instead of strengthened. The great interests of truth and justice are betrayed, rather than supported, by all softening qualifying concessions. Every iota which is yielded of their rightful claims, impairs the conviction of their rectitude, and, consequently, weakens their success. Truth and justice, make their best way in the world, when they appear in bold and simple majesty;—their demands are most willingly conceded, when they are most fearlessly claimed.

Were the *immediate* freedom of the slave demanded, because in the first instance, it was unlawfully and violently wrested from him!—because, ever since, it has been most unjustly and cruelly withheld from him; because it is his unalienable right, which he holds by a divine charter, which no human claims can disannul:—were the immediate abolition of slavery, in the *British dominions*, demanded, because slavery, is in direct opposition to the spirit of the *British constitution*, to the spirit and letter of the Christian religion,—to every principle of humanity and justice;—because, as long as it is suffered to exist, it must remain the fruitful source of the most atrocious crimes, the most cruel sufferings; because, as long as it is suffered to exist, its abettors and supporters, passive as well as active, (*now that their eyes are wide open to its enormities*) must lie under the divine malediction, and experience, sooner or later, the certain and awful visitations of retributive justice,—the fearful accomplishment of that solemn declaration,—“With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again:”—Demands so evidently just,—such plain appeals to reason and conscience,—to law and equity;—such serious reference to Divine authority,—to future retribution;—would be more successful,—would be better calculated to keep alive the public sympathy,—would lead to more unwearied exertions,—to greater sacrifices,—than the slow, cautious, accommodating measures now proposed by the abolitionists;—than any timorous suggestions of expediency,—any attempts to conciliate the favour, or to disarm the opposition of West Indian slave holders.

When an obvious and imperative duty is encumbered with considerations which do not properly belong to it; its obligations, instead of being enforced, are enfeebled; its motives, instead of being concentrated, are divided and scattered; and the duty, if not entirely neglected, will be but languidly and partially performed. We make slow progress in virtue, lose much time in labour, when, instead of going boldly forward in its straight and obvious path, we are continually enquiring how far we may proceed in it without difficulty and without opposition.

Had the abolitionists preserved a single eye to their great object;—had they kept it distinct and separate from all extraneous considerations;—had they pursued it by a course more

direct, through means more simple;—had they confided more in the goodness of their cause, and dreaded less the opposition of its adversaries;—had they depended more upon divine, and less upon human support—their triumphs, instead of their defeats, would, long since, have been recorded. Surely their eyes must at length be opened;—they must perceive that they have not gone the right way to work,—that the apprehension of *losing all, by asking too much*,—has driven them into the danger of losing all, by having asked *too little*;—that the spirit of compromise and accommodation has placed them nearly in the situation of the unfortunate man in the fable, who, by trying to please every body, pleased nobody, and lost the object of his solicitude into the bargain.

It had been well, for the poor oppressed African, had the asserters of his rights entered the lists against his oppressors, with more of the spirit of Christian combatants, and less of worldly politicians;—had they remembered, through the whole of the struggle, that it was a conflict of sacred duty, against sordid interests,—of right against might;—that it was, in fact, an *holy war*,—an attack upon the strong holds, the deep intrenchments of the very powers of darkness; in which courage would be more availing than caution;—in which success was to be expected, less from prudential or political expedients, than from that all-controlling power, which alone gives efficacy to human exertions,—which often defeats the best concerted schemes of human sagacity and accomplishes his great purposes through the instrumentality of the simplest agency. Had the labours of the abolitionists been begun and continued on Divine, instead of human reliance, *immediate* emancipation would have appeared just as attainable as *gradual* emancipation. But, by substituting the latter object for the former, under the idea that its accomplishment was more probable, less exposed to objection;—and by endeavouring to carry it, through considerations of interest, rather than obligations of duty; they have betrayed an unworthy diffidence in the cause in which they have embarked;—they have converted the great business of emancipation into an object of political calculation;—they have withdrawn it from Divine, and placed it under human patronage;—and disappointment and defeat, have been the inevitable consequence.

If the deadly root of slavery be ever extirpated out of British soil, it will be by such exertions as are prompted by duty rather than interest. We cannot sufficiently admire the great wisdom and goodness of those providential arrangements which have, in the general course of events, so inseparably connected our duty with our interest;—but with regard to the broad and palpable distinctions between right and wrong, virtue and vice;—the more simple and direct the reference to the will of our Divine Lawgiver, and that of his vicegerent, conscience,—the more determined will be our resolution,—the more decisive our conduct.—“How shall I do this great wickedness and sin

against God"—will be the most influential of all considerations. And the solemn inquiry, pressed home to the conscience, how an enlightened and Christian government,—how an enlightened and Christian community, can, in any way, encourage or sanction such a complicated system of iniquity as that of slavery,—“the greatest practical blunder, as well as the greatest calamity, that has ever disgraced and afflicted human nature,”—without sharing its guilt, and, if there be a righteous Governor of the universe, its punishment also?—will be followed up by propositions more consistent and energetic, than such as aim only at its *gradual* extermination.

The very able mover of the question in Parliament last year, proposed that our colonial slavery should be suffered—“to expire of itself,—to die a natural death.—But a natural death, it never will die.—It must be crushed at once, or not at all. While the abolitionists are endeavouring *gradually* to enfeeble and kill it by inches, it will gradually discover the means of reinforcing its strength, and will soon defy all the puny attacks of its assailants.

In the mean time, let the abolitionists remember,—while they are reasoning and declaiming and petitioning Parliament for gradual emancipation,—let them remember, that the miseries they deplore remain unmitigated,—the crimes they execrate are still perpetuated;—still the tyrant frowns—and the slave trembles;—the cart-whip still plies at the will of the inhuman driver—and the hopeless victim still writhes under its lash. The ameliorating measures *recommended* by Parliament, to the colonial legislators, are neglected and spurned. The bad passions of the slave holder are exasperated and infuriated by interference, and vengeance falls, with accumulated weight, on the slave. It had been better for him, had no efforts been made for his emancipation, than that they should ultimately fail, or be feebly exerted—the interval of suspense, will be an interval of restless perturbation,—of aggravated tyranny in the oppressor,—of aggravated suffering to the oppressed. *Unsuccessful opposition, to crimes of every description, invariably increases their power and malignity.*

An *immediate* emancipation then, is the object to be aimed at;—it is more wise and rational,—more politic and safe, as well as more just and humane,—than gradual emancipation. The interest, moral and political, temporal and eternal, of all parties concerned, will be best promoted by *immediate* emancipation. The sooner the planter is obliged to abandon a system which torments him with perpetual alarms of insurrection and massacre,—which keeps him in the most debasing moral bondage,—subjects him to a tyranny, of all others, the most injurious and destructive—that of sordid and vindictive passions;—the sooner he is obliged to adopt a more humane and more *lucrative* policy in the cultivation of his plantations;—the sooner the over-laboured, crouching slave, is converted into a free labourer,—

his compulsory, unremunerated toil, under the impulse of the cart whip, exchanged for cheerful, well recompensed industry,—his bitter sufferings for peaceful enjoyment,—his deep execration of his merciless tyrants, for respectful attachment to his humane and equitable masters;—the sooner the Government and the people of this country purify themselves from the guilt of supporting or tolerating a system of such monstrous injustice, productive of such complicated enormities;—the sooner all this mass of impolicy, crime and suffering is got rid of—the better.

It behoves the advocates of this great cause then, to take the most direct, the most speedy and effectual means of accomplishing their object. If any can be devised more direct, more speedy and effectual, or less exceptionable in its operation than that which has been suggested,—let it be immediately adopted; but let us no longer compromise the requisitions of humanity and justice, for those of an artful and sordid policy;—let there be no betraying of the cause by needless delay;—delay is always dangerous;—on this momentous question, (humanly speaking) it will be fatal, if much longer protracted. The public sympathy is already declining,—people are becoming tired of the subject,—they grow listless and impatient when it is introduced;—they tell you, “they wish to hear no more of it,—their minds are made up,—no advantage can be gained by farther discussion,—the subject must now be left to Parliament.” Alas! and *how* has Parliament disposed of it? How has it realized the *very modest* hopes, indulged by the abolitionists, in consequence of its declarations in favour of gradual abolition, a year ago? By its recent decisions, the great work of emancipation appears to retrograde instead of advance. The bullying of the slave holders, is said to have proved completely triumphant. The royal proclamation just issued, is rightly denominated a *hope extinguisher*, to the wretched slave population. Well may the abolitionists express their disappointment, on finding the present measures of Government, fall so far short of the expectations, which the promises of last session had excited. Well may the right honourable secretary be charged with, “having done nothing, or worse than nothing; with being satisfied, at most, to see his pledge in favour of a whole archipelago, reduced to a single island; while a law is still to prevail in every island of the West Indies, except *Trinidad*, which authorises a female negro, to be stripped, in the presence of her father, husband or son, and flogged with a cart whip!!”

There were some, who anticipated these results; cheerless and melancholy as they are, they are such as might reasonably have been expected from the proposition for *gradual* emancipation,—and if persisted in, it will assuredly end, in *no* emancipation. The time is critical. The *general* interest, in this great subject, is evidently on the wane,—and it should be remembered, that even the most humane and susceptible,—

these who are most under the influence of true Christian principle, are not always wound up to such a pitch of disinterested and ardent zeal, as is requisite to cope with such a host of interested and powerful opponents, as are the West Indian proprietors and slave holders. Those, who are "called to glory and virtue,"—invited, to labour, in the Divine vineyard,—are admonished, to "work whilst it is day,—for the night cometh, in which no man can work;"—whilst they have light, they are admonished to "walk in the light, lest darkness come upon them." Mental darkness, and spiritual night, steal fast upon those, who, when an imperious duty is presented to them,—when sufficient ability is imparted for its accomplishment,—falser and procrastinate.

If the great work of emancipation be not *now* accomplished,—humanly speaking, it may be despaired of, as far as our agency is concerned. The rising generation may furnish no such zealous, devoted advocates, as a Clarkson, a Wilberforce, and a Buxton. If the clear light, the full information, they have so generally diffused:—the deep interest and sympathy they have so generally excited, produce no other results than those at present contemplated by the abolitionists:—this country may fall under the curse of being judicially hardened and blinded, in consequence of having been softened and enlightened to so little purpose:—and the emancipation of *eight hundred thousand British slaves!* may be effected through other means and other agency, which, when once roused into action, may realize all those terrific scenes of insurrection and carnage which the imagination of the planter has so often contemplated.

Since the preceding pages were written, the sentences passed upon the insurgents of Demerara and Kingston have reached us. Some, had been hung, others, had received corporeal punishment—to what extent—let those who have ears to hear, and hearts to feel, deeply ponder. Some had received, others, were yet to receive—**ONE THOUSAND LASHES,—AND WERE CONDEMNED TO BE WORKED IN CHAINS DURING THE RESIDUE OF THEIR LIVES!!** The horrid work, has probably, by this time been completed, human interposition therefore, with respect to these individual victims of **WEST INDIAN JUSTICE** will now be of no avail.

But shall such sentences as these, be suffered to pass the ordeal of public opinion? Shall they be established as precedents for future judgments, on future insurgents? Forbid it—every feeling of humanity—in *every bosom*. Let every principle of virtue which distinguishes the human from the brute creation,—the professors of the benignant, compassionate religion of Christ, from the savage and blood-thirsty worshippers of Moloch,—raise one united, determined and solemn protest against the repetition of these barbarities, which blaspheme the sacred name of justice,—and seem to imprecate Almighty vengeance.

Will the inhabitants of this benevolent, this *Christian* country, *now* want a stimulant to rouse their best exertions,—to nerve their resolutions against all participation with these human blood-hounds? Will the British public *now* want a “spirit stirring” incentive to prohibit, and to interdict,—henceforth, and for ever,—the merchandize of slavery? Let the produce of slave labour,—henceforth, and for ever,—be regarded as “*the accursed thing*,” and refused admission into our houses;—or let us renounce our Christian profession, and disgrace it no longer, by a selfish, cold-hearted indifference which, under such circumstances, would be reproachful to savages.

What was the offence which brought down this frightful vengeance on the heads of these devoted victims? What horrible crime could have instigated man to sentence his fellow man, to a punishment so tremendous?—to doom his brother to undergo the protracted torture of a THOUSAND LASHES?—to have his quivering flesh mangled and torn from his living body?—and to labour through life under the galling and ignominious weight of chains? It was insurrection. But in what cause did they become insurgents? Was it not in that cause, which, of all others, can best *excuse*, if it cannot *justify* insurrection? Was it not in the cause of self-defence from the most degrading, intolerable oppression?

But what was the *immediate* occasion of this insurrection? What goaded these poor wretches on to brave the dreadful hazards of rebellion? One of them, now hanging in chains at Demerara, was sold and separated from his wife and family of ten children, after a marriage of eighteen years,—*and thereby made a rebel*. Another was a slave of no common intellect, whose wife, the object of his warmest affections, was torn from his bosom, and forced to become the mistress of an overseer. His domestic happiness thus destroyed for ever, he became, (how should it have been otherwise?) disaffected and desperate. Such provocations, added to their common and every day wrongs, seem beyond human endurance, and might instigate “the very stones to mutiny.”

How preposterously partial and inconsistent are we in the extension of our sympathy, our approbation and our assistance towards the oppressed and miserable! We extol the resistance of the *Greeks*,—we deem it heroic and meritorious. We deem it an act of virtue,—of *Christian charity*,—to supply them with *arms and ammunition*, to enable them to *persist in insurrection*. Possibly, in the longest list of munificent subscribers to these *Greek* insurgents, the names of some noble lords and honourable gentlemen may be found—who sanction and approve the visitation of WEST INDIAN SLAVE INSURGENTS, with the GIBBET, and the infliction of ONE THOUSAND LASHES!!

But let us, whose moral perceptions are unblinded by interest or prejudice,—whose charity is unwarped by partiality or hypocrisy;—let us pursue a more rational and consistent course.

Let us not overlook our own urgent duties in the pursuit of such as are less imperative. Let us *first—mind our own business*,—"pluck the beam out of our own eye." Let us *first* extend the helping hand, to those who have the *first* claim to our assistance. Let us *first* liberate our own slaves—which we may do, without furnishing them with *arms or ammunition*. Then, we shall have *clean hands*,—and the Divine blessing may then be expected to crown our exertions for the redemption of other captives.

Should the weak objection, still haunt some inconsiderate reader, of the little good, which can reasonably be expected to result from *individual* abstinence from West Indian produce; let him reflect, that the most wonderful productions of human skill and industry; the most astonishing effects of human power have been accomplished by combined exertions, which, when individually and separately considered, appear feeble and insignificant. Let him reflect, that the grandest objects of human observation consist of small agglomerated particles; that the globe itself is composed of atoms too minute for discernment; that extended ages consist of accumulated moments. Let him reflect, that greater victories have been achieved by the combined expression of *individual opinion*, than by fleets and armies; that greater moral revolutions have been accomplished by the combined exertion of *individual resolution*, than were ever effected by acts of Parliament.

The hydra-headed monster of slavery, will never be destroyed by other means, than the united expression of *individual opinion*, and the united exertion of *individual resolution*. Let no man restrain the expression of the one, or the exertion of the other, from the apprehension that his single efforts will be of no avail. The greatest and the best work must have a *beginning*,—often, it is a very small and obscure one. And though the example in question should not become *universal*, we may surely hope that it will become general.

It is too much, to expect that the matter will be taken up—(otherwise, than to make a jest of it) by the thoughtless and the selfish: what proportion these bear to the considerate and the compassionate, remains to be ascertained. By *these*, we may reasonably expect that it *will* be taken up, with resolution and consistency. By Christian societies of every denomination,—pre-eminently by that, which has hitherto stood foremost in the great cause of abolition. By the great body of the Catholics too, who attach so *much merit* to abstinence and self-denial;—and by all the different Protestant professors, (who are at all sincere in their profession) of the one religion of universal compassion;—which requires us "*to love our neighbour as ourselves*,"—this testimony against slavery may be expected to be borne with scrupulous and conscientious fidelity.

Think, but for a moment, at what a trifling sacrifice the redemption of *eight hundred thousand of our fellow creatures* from

the lowest condition of degradation and misery may be accomplished. Abstinence from *one single article* of luxury would annihilate West Indian slavery!! But *abstinence* it cannot be called;—we only need substitute *East India*, for *West India* sugar,—and the British atmosphere would be purified at once, from the poisonous infection of slavery. The antidote of this deadly bane; for which we have been so many years in laborious but unsuccessful search, is most simple and obvious,—too simple and obvious, it should seem, to have been regarded. Like Naaman, of old, who expected to be cured of his leprosy, by some grand and astonishing evolution, and disdained to wash, as he was directed, in the obscure waters of Damascus;—we look for the abolition of British slavery, not to the simple and obvious means of its accomplishment, which lie within our own power,—but through the slow and solemn process of Parliamentary discussion,—through the “pomp and circumstance” of legislative enactment;—most absurdly remonstrating and petitioning *against* that system of enormous wickedness, which we voluntarily tax ourselves to the annual amount of two millions sterling, to *support!*!”

That abstinence from West Indian sugar alone, would sign the death warrant of West Indian slavery, is morally certain. The gratuity of two millions annually, is acknowledged by the planters, to be insufficient to bolster up their tottering system,—and they scruple not, to declare to Parliament, that they must be ruined, if the protecting duties, against East India competition, be not augmented.

One, concluding word, to such as may be convinced of the duty, but may still be incredulous as to the *efficacy* of this species of abstinence, from the apprehension that it will never become sufficiently general to accomplish its purpose. Should your example *not* be followed;—should it be utterly unavailing towards the attainment of its object;—still, it will have its own abundant reward:—still, it will be attended with the consciousness of sincerity and consistency,—of possessing “*clean hands*,”—of having “no fellowship with the workers of iniquity;” still, it will be attended with the approbation of conscience,—and doubtless, with that of the Great Searcher of hearts,—who regarded with favourable eye, the mite cast by the poor widow, into the treasury, and declared, that a cup of cold water only, administered in Christian charity, “shall in no wise lose its reward.”

* Every reader may not be aware, that such is the amount of duty laid on *East India*, to keep up the unnatural price of *West India* sugar.



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