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**WILSON
ANNEX**

REMARKS ON THE INSURRECTION IN
BARBADOS

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5
REMARKS

ON THE

Insurrection in Barbadoes,

AND

THE BILL

FOR THE

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P281

REMARKS,

&c.

THE intelligence of an insurrectionary movement among the slaves in the island of Barbadoes, which, though it was speedily suppressed, has, nevertheless, been productive of extensive mischief, has been employed by the West-India party to throw discredit on the measure proposed by Mr. Wilberforce, for effectually restraining the importation of fresh slaves into the colonies, and for ameliorating the condition of their existing population. It may therefore be important to take a concise view of the nature and bearings of that unhappy occurrence.

It is affirmed by the opponents of the plan for registering the slaves in the West Indies, that its introduction into Parliament occasioned the late insurrection; the slaves having been led to conceive, that emancipation was intended by that measure. Now, even if this were a true representation of the case, who would be to blame; the West Indians who have uniformly and clamorously maintained, that the real object of the Registry Bill is emancipation; or the friends and supporters of that bill who have constantly denied that it has any such object? If the slaves in the West Indies have indeed been led to expect that registration would involve emancipation, who but the West-India planters, and the West-India planters alone, excited that false and delusive expectation?

It certainly does not seem, at first sight, strange that an insurrection of slaves should have taken place in one of our slave colonies. Such events have, in all former

times, been common; and the historian of Jamaica expressly admits, that in the very condition of colonial bondage, there is enough to account for such occurrences without the necessity of tracing them to any more remote and hidden cause. The real nature of this bondage has often been clearly explained. In no part of the British dominions does this unhappy state of society exist in a more unmitigated form than in the island of Barbadoes. When, in 1802, Lord Seaforth proposed to the Assembly of that island, that the murder of a slave, which, according to the Barbadoes law, was compensated by a fine of 11*l.* 4*s.* sterling, should be made felony; the Assembly resented the proposal, and appointed a committee to prepare a message in reply, which should be calculated to repel this insult, and should evince that the House understood its interests and its rights. If the reader will turn to a note at the end of this sheet, (p. 13) he will there find a horrid exemplification of the deplorably oppressed and degraded state of the Negro Slaves in this particular island, as it existed in the year 1805. Since that period the only change which the Barbadoes Legislature has even affected to make in their condition has been the enactment of a law, whereby the murder of a slave, if perpetrated *wantonly, maliciously, and without ANY provocation*, is punishable with death. This law, however, while it bears the semblance of a nascent sense, among the legislators of Barbadoes, of the claim which their slaves have to

legal protection, is no more than a gross mockery of justice.

In every other colony, the planters have deemed it right, of late years, to frame a kind of new *code noir*, in which, to the English ear at least, many important improvements have been introduced. How far they were sincerely meant to remedy the evils of colonial bondage, may be inferred from the declaration of Governor Prevost with respect to the Meliorating Act of Dominica. "It appears," he says, "to have been considered, from the day it was passed until this hour, as a *political measure*, to avert the interference of the mother country in the management of slaves." The clauses which had given a promise of better days, we are told by the same high authority, had been wholly neglected*. In Barbadoes, however, they sullenly refused even this barren profession of reform; and their *code noir* remains unaltered, except by the single enactment already mentioned, which leaves the murder of a Negro still punishable only with a fine of 11*l.* 4*s.* sterling; except when it can be *clearly* proved, (for penal laws must be interpreted strictly), to the satisfaction of a Barbadian jury, that the murder was committed *wantonly*, and that the murderer had not received even the slightest degree of provocation. The words are, "*without ANY provocation.*"

If we consider these circumstances, and review the proofs exhibited in 1805, as they appear in the annexed note, of the state of feeling among the Whites in Barbadoes towards their slaves, we shall not think it strange, however deeply we may deplore the event, that an insurrection should have taken place; and if to all this should have been added any local and temporary privation of the usual quantity of food, arising either from a scarcity in the island or from the restrictions on importation from the United States, the event

* See, for the above facts, House of Commons Papers of 25th Feb. 1805.

will admit of a farther and not difficult explanation. There is, indeed, *no direct* information to this effect; but there exist certain Resolutions of the Barbadoes Assembly, in the month of November, 1815, complaining loudly of the prohibition of a free intercourse with America, as having reduced them to a state of unexampled privation. Is there not some ground to suspect that the complaint of that body may have been caused, in part at least, by a want of food? This suggestion has been made simply with a view to investigation. The West Indians, indeed, have assumed, previous to inquiry, that the insurrection arose from the discussion of the Registry Bill in Parliament. The reader, however, may be assured, that such a cause is wholly inadequate to such an effect.

The planters have at all times professed to fear that their gangs would be excited to insurrection by parliamentary discussions in this country. But their own conduct, throughout the whole of the abolition controversy, flatly contradicts that profession, and proves it insincere; for these very discussions, of which the slaves could never hear without their help, have been regularly published by themselves, in the colonial newspapers,—or rather have been misrepresented by them, in the way most likely to infuse dangerous ideas into the minds of the slaves, if they were thought susceptible of such impressions. For instance, in a Jamaica Gazette of March, 1816, the Registry Bill is elaborately arraigned as founded on views of a revolutionary kind, and calculated to produce insurrection; and it is held out as so practicable an object to destroy the lives and properties of the White inhabitants, that it is alleged to be the general practice and feeling of the White colonists to remit all the money they can save to England and America, as a provision for the worst that may happen.—On a

former occasion, when an equally loud and unfounded clamour had been raised against the parliamentary discussion of the Abolition Bill, as tending to insurrection, the Assembly of Jamaica, as if in derision of their own professed alarm, printed in their own gazette, a report which stated at considerable length, and with great precision, the means by which a general insurrection might most successfully be organised among the slaves; and furnished complete and detailed information as to the plan of operations by which the insurgents might infallibly become masters of the island.—We could multiply similar instances, not only in past years, but in times even of recent date. Even in the newspapers of Barbadoes, formal Resolutions of the Assembly were published only three or four months before the insurrection broke out, denouncing the Registry Bill as a plan for the emancipation of the slaves. Surely if there were any truth in the clamours of the planters, on the subject of parliamentary discussion, they would never have been so infatuated as to make their own newspapers, which circulate freely throughout the islands, the vehicle of such statements. What can be a more irrefragable proof that the planters themselves did not believe that there was in their slaves any aptitude to be excited by such discussions? If they did believe it, would they have continued to fill the columns of their gazettes with inflammatory resolutions, clamours, and alarms, at least as directly calculated as any thing of the kind could be, to produce insurrection? In England, indeed, for the sake of effect in argument, they feelingly dwell on the danger of even advertising to the subject. We must speak in a whisper, even when we speak at the distance of 6000 miles, of slavery in the West Indies. But in the islands we find, instead of this extreme caution, a most wanton publicity and noise on the subject.

We say, *wanton*; because there, all being of one mind, newspaper discussions are at least perfectly useless. And yet if any man desires to see the strongest things that have ever been said in Parliament against the colonial system, the things most capable of being represented as pointing at general enfranchisement, he may find them in the West-India gazettes.

If, then, the late insurrection must be traced to the discussions which have taken place on the subject of the Registry Bill, how is it that the West Indians should overlook those discussions which they themselves have been so infatuated as to promulge and circulate throughout their plantations, and should fix the blame on the African Institution, the Christian Observer, a pamphlet of Mr. Stephen, or a speech of Mr. Wilberforce; of all which the Black and Coloured population of the island could only hear by their own imprudent officiousness?

But we confess ourselves not satisfied even with this solution of the matter, although it might seem to account naturally enough for what has taken place. If we consider the utter insensibility which the slaves generally have shewn to the revolutions in the French islands, especially to that in St. Domingo;—if we consider, that in the twenty years that preceded, and in nine more that have followed the Abolition, (notwithstanding the unreserved freedom with which their state was discussed in the colonial journals, and the incessant cry, that abolition, not only would be mistaken for emancipation, but really meant it, and that the moment the abolition was announced, the slaves would infallibly revolt,) insurrections have been unprecedentedly rare; that till now not one has occurred which could be forced into the service of casting blame on the abolitionists in England, or lending countenance to past predic-

tions; that of the torrents of blood which we were told would flow from the abolition in our colonies, not one drop is even alleged to have been shed;—if we consider all this, it seems impossible, in the present state of our information, to acquiesce in the view which West Indians have taken of the causes of the late insurrection, and which they have laboured to impress on the public mind. According to them, the Registry Bill alone is in fault. Wishing to keep the light of a Registry Bill from their plantations, they would persuade us that those plantations are inflammable magazines. Yet they themselves at the same moment, as we have seen, are shaking torches and firebrands within them.

But an insurrection has happened at Barbadoes, within about a year after Mr. Wilberforce had brought the Registry Bill into Parliament. True; and within a shorter time after a motion had been made for Catholic Emancipation. The argument of *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fits the one cause as well as the other. The name and object best fits the latter. The registration of slaves, as a clear record of their servile condition, is certainly as remote in principle as in sound from a gift of universal emancipation, and yet we are gravely told that the Negroes mistook the one for the other. If, indeed, such a mistake were the real cause of the insurrection, with whom did it originate but with the planters themselves, who have chosen wilfully and clamorously, in defiance of evidence, in contempt of common sense and candour, to affirm their identity?

The insurrection at Barbadoes has, indeed, been a great and deplorable calamity. At the same time, it is far from exhibiting any distinct marks of an extensive insurrection—the result of a pre-conceived plot. The movement was by no means general in the

island; and it does not appear, as yet, that any slaves were implicated but those who belonged to the estates where the mischief was done. These estates are situated in four different parishes; St. George's, Christ Church, St. Philip's, and St. John's; but as there is a district in which the confines of all these parishes meet, the area of the insurrection may nevertheless have been small. It broke out on two plantations belonging to the same proprietor (a Mr. Scott); and it seems to have been for some time conceived that it was confined to them. It may be collected also from the printed accounts compared together, that the original insurgents remained on those estates, without attempting to advance further, until the Barbadoes militia arrived, and began to fire on them; when they at once dispersed in all directions. The same was the conduct of both parties, on every other estate to which the mischief extended, except on one; where, we are told, the Negroes made a stand. This stand could not be very obstinate, since only two White men were killed during the whole of the insurrection. What weapons the Negroes were armed with, we do not learn: had they been able to procure firearms and ammunition, it would naturally have been mentioned. It is not even stated, that any large body was any where formed and acting together; or even that the Negroes of the different estates were united. Indeed, the contrary seems to be implied.

These circumstances clearly indicate a want of concert and premeditation, and concur with the more general character of their proceedings, to discredit the notion of any deep-laid or extensively ramified conspiracy. If we are to suppose them capable of combining under the direction, as we are told, of artful and intelligent leaders, they could hardly have acted so stupidly and irrationally, as to

employ themselves solely in burning the cane pieces in a particular spot, a few miles from the chief town, whence a large military force could be immediately assembled and marched against them; and then to stand by their separate boufires till their enemies arrived to destroy them. Some attempt would rather have been made, however desperate, to surprise the town, or some place of arms; or, at least, to penetrate to other parts of the island, which presented a prospect of less speedy and powerful resistance.

But besides the inherent follies which appear in the execution of the alleged plot, Barbadoes was the very worst field for such an experiment. In no British colony is success in an attempt to obtain even a short lived freedom by insurrection so hopeless. There are no mountains, no fastnesses, no forests. European foot, and even horse, can traverse it in all directions. The Whites are there also peculiarly strong in numbers. —The time too was as ill chosen as the place. The regular force in the island was great, and the commander-in chief was at hand in a neighbouring island, with powerful reinforcements.

If we suppose the generality of the slaves so wretchedly low in information and intellect, as not to perceive the insanity of such an enterprize, how can we believe that they should have acted on a speculation respecting the effects of the interference of the British Parliament with colonial legislation? If, on the other hand, we assume, that they were misled by artful leaders, is it credible, that those leaders would have chosen such a time and place for such a project; to say nothing more of the follies and absurdities of its execution?

What may be the result of farther evidence, it would be premature to say. In the mean time, the accounts already received contain nothing which renders it ne-

cessary to assume that the whole mischief did not originate in a revolt of Mr. Scott's Negroes against their immediate masters or managers, excited by some local and peculiar cause; and which, in its progress, may possibly have been aggravated by the impressions the Negroes may have received from the intemperate representations of their masters, respecting the tendency of the Registry Bill. It is obvious, that when a revolt has once taken place, from whatever cause, and outrages ensue, which are known to be past forgiveness, the slaves naturally become desperate, resort to conflagration and plunder, and are eager to seduce their companions and connections, the slaves of neighbouring estates, to follow their example.

The extent of the mischief, in the present instance, may be easily accounted for by the avowed conduct of the militia. They fired as soon as they arrived, and pursued the fugitives in every direction, through the neighbouring estates, pouring in their shot wherever they saw any Negroes flying or assembled together. They confessedly burnt the negro houses on all the disturbed plantations, from motives, it is said, of *policy*. Now without stopping to inquire whether, in the fury and precipitation of midnight-proceedings like these, the innocent might not be confounded with the guilty, there is strong ground for supposing that much of the mischief done to the estates, besides the destruction of the negro houses, was caused by these measures of repression. The cane pieces, at that season, are so inflammable, that a spark from a tobacco pipe is sufficient to set them on fire. It is highly probable, therefore, that no small proportion of the twenty-five or thirty estates, which suffered from the conflagration of their canes, owed their loss, either to the firing of the militia on the fugitives, or to the burning of the adjoining huts.

Such are some of the reasons for regarding this calamity as the result of ordinary causes, and not of any general or deep-laid plot. But even if the contrary opinion were admitted, we should still be far removed from the conclusion that it originated in the Registry Bill. The West Indians, indeed, naturally cast the blame of it on that obnoxious measure, of which they thus hope to get rid; but their policy and their feelings are too well known, to allow us to rely on their assertion of so improbable a fact, unsupported by clear, and consistent, and satisfactory evidence. Panic, in such cases, never fails to magnify every plantation revolt, or riot, into a general conspiracy; and the confessions of wretched prisoners, anxious to say whatever they understand will be acceptable to those who hold their lives in their hands, will never be wanting to confirm the apprehension, till it is slowly dispelled by rational investigation, and a careful comparison of different accounts. In the present case there is this peculiar disadvantage to struggle with, that Policy gives its own direction to the error, and will probably, therefore, obstruct its rectification. On the honourable character, however, of Sir James Leith, the Governor, the very strongest reliance may be placed; and however he may be deceived by misrepresentation in the first instance, he will not, for one moment after he has discovered the deception, lend it his countenance.

After all, to return to the point from which we set out, if the allegation of the West Indians should prove to be well founded, who would really be to blame? The Negroes, we are told, were taught to believe that the Registry Bill was emancipation. And who gave birth to this idle fiction but the West-India legislatures, and the West-India planters themselves? They clamorously alleged, that

the emancipation of the slaves was the end at which the authors of the bill were aiming; and they raised an opposition violent enough to persuade the uninformed and unreflecting, that they were in earnest in that charge. The colonists of Barbadoes have not been behind any of their brethren in this insidious and dangerous policy; and if they have suffered by it, they ought to blame themselves, and not those against whom it was directed. The man who points his gun at his neighbour's breast, and is hurt by its recoil, might as reasonably exclaim against his intended victim, as the Barbadian planters against the promoters of the bill for the registration of slaves.

A thousand human lives it seems—some accounts say two thousand—have been lost by this calamity, in the field, or by summary military executions; how justly, may perhaps hereafter appear; how mercifully, the Barbadoes militia can best tell. It is not so that insurrections are suppressed in England; and yet these are our fellow-subjects. If negro slavery requires such dreadful expedients to maintain it, let those lay the case to heart who oppose, perhaps, the only measure by which that opprobrious state can be reformed. The repetition of such horrors may be prevented by the timely interposition of Parliament, but certainly not by its forbearance. Even if the pretences of West Indians were true, it would still be the duty of Parliament to discuss and to pass the Registry Bill, were it only to disprove at once the delusive representations which are alleged to have produced the mischief, and to lay a solid basis for future peace and progressive improvement. For can it be denied, that the same incendiaries, who are said to have deceived the slaves in this instance, might have done so by as short a process, if the Registry Bill had never been brought forward at all; and that if the doors of Parliament were for

ever barred against the claims of our negro population, it would still be as easy, then as now, to say, that their enfranchisement had been decreed by England, and was only obstructed by the selfish policy of their masters? The true remedy, not only against the existing delusion, if delusion there be, but against future evils of a like kind, would be to establish this very Registry Bill, the nature and objects of which have been so wilfully and mendaciously mistated. It is remarkable, that in those colonies in which it has actually been established, no mischief has flowed from it: on the contrary, it holds forth a promise of the highest benefit. In the island of Trinidad, where it has been in force for five years, no mistake, as to its real nature, has existed; nor has there been the slightest pretence of inconvenience, except what arises from the payment of the prescribed fees, and the necessary precision of the enactments. In St. Lucie and the Isle of France also, the measure has been carried into effect. In none of these islands has there been the slightest tendency to revolt or insubordination, nor even any apparent misconception, on the part of the slaves, respecting the object of this dreaded enactment. All has been profound tranquillity, except in as far as the resistance of the masters to this salutary measure has rendered the strong arm of authority necessary in order to enforce obedience. In its operation, indeed, so far has it been from being adverse to the public peace, that we are assured by the newspapers, that in the island of Trinidad, where it has existed for a longer time than in any other colony, the Governor, when he heard of the insurrection in Barbadoes, did not even think it necessary to resort to the expedient of proclaiming martial law, to which they had immediate recourse in all the unregistered islands. This circumstance alone furnishes a satisfactory

reply to all that has been alleged respecting the mischievous tendency of this measure, and seems clearly to point out to Parliament the course which it is their duty to pursue.

On this point, indeed, putting the West Indians, whose views are peculiar to themselves, out of the question, there seems to be but one opinion. The only difference respects the mode of effecting what all admit to be expedient.—In the House of Lords, Lord Grenville recently announced his purpose of bringing forward the Registry Bill early in the next session. On this occasion Earl Bathurst, the Secretary of State for the Colonial Department stated, that it was the intention of Government to recommend in the most earnest manner, to the Colonial Legislatures, the adoption of a measure calculated to answer the purposes of a Registry Bill. If the Colonial Legislatures should choose to take up the matter, he trusted it would be with a full determination really to effectuate the purpose, instead of merely doing it in form and leaving it undone in substance and effect. He conceived it would be even better for them sturdily to refuse doing this at all, than to proceed in a hollow and delusive course. The principle, however, on which he proceeded was not to correct an existing evil, but to prevent the occurrence of an evil which, without such a regulation, would probably arise. He did not deny the right of Parliament to bind the Colonies by such a law; but he wished to try what the Colonial Legislatures themselves would do before we resorted to so offensive an expedient.—Lord Grenville remarked, in reply, that whatever were the facts with respect to the past clandestine importation of slaves into our colonies, he well knew that it was the duty of a wise and just legislature to prevent the occurrence of evil if possible, as well as to restrain or abolish it when it had arisen; and when

he should come to the discussion of that subject, he hoped to be able to convince their lordships, that in a period of peace, unless some such measure as the Slave Registry Bill were adopted, it would be impossible to prevent the prevalence of this illegal practice, not in a few instances, but to an enormous and horrible extent; while at the same time discovery might be rendered so difficult that it might be perhaps impossible to prove the violation of the law, even in a few instances. These were the grounds on which he proceeded, not on proofs as to the past, but on the manifest necessity for adopting measures of precaution with a view to the future; and there he rested on the same grounds as those stated by his noble friend. But if this were the time for the discussion, he should endeavour to establish the propriety of this proceeding upon a much larger view of the subject. Admitting that, in point of expediency, the British Legislature ought only to interfere in internal regulations where an extreme case should be pointed out, still it was fitting that the British Parliament should have the means of forming an accurate judgment as to whether such an extreme case did or did not exist. Nothing could be better calculated for this purpose than the slave-registry law, as this would bring regularly before the British Parliament the actual state and condition of the slave population. By this means the British Legislature would be enabled to judge whether the population increased according to the ordinary course of nature, or whether it was in such a condition as could only be produced by the application of some violent and unnatural cause. This was an object well worthy the superintending care and attention of the British Parliament; and if it was a matter of any consequence that the British Legislature should know whether its slave population, consisting of a million of human beings, did meet

with all that security and favourable usage of which the unhappy condition of that population admitted, then there could be no better means of procuring that information than by the adoption of this slave-registry plan. He was glad that this measure was to be recommended to the Colonial Legislatures; and he would not pay so ill a compliment as to suppose that such a recommendation would be met with a spirit of animosity, or with any other feeling than that respectful deference which on every account it must deserve; or that they would attempt the ostensible adoption of the measure, with a view secretly to counteract its effect. He would not anticipate any such thing; and it certainly was the most anxious wish of all those who felt most deeply interested on this subject, to pay deference to the views and feelings of those who opposed them, in as far as that could be done without the sacrifice of the great end of all their exertions.

This conversation took place in the House of Lords, on the 30th May, before the insurrection in Barbadoes was yet known. But the knowledge of that event does not appear to have altered the views of his Majesty's Ministers. On the 19th instant, an Address to the Prince Regent was voted by the House of Commons, praying him to direct the Governors of the islands to proclaim his high displeasure at the daring insurrection which had taken place; to remove the false impressions which might have been produced on the minds of the Negroes on the subject of their emancipation; and to signify his confident expectation and desire to the local authorities, that they would carry into effect every measure which may tend to promote the morals and religion, as well as the comfort and happiness, of the Negroes. In the course of his speech, on this occasion, Lord Castlereagh observed, that while the idea ought to be repelled that

registration meant manumission, he thought it proper to mark, in the strongest manner, that the Legislature at home were anxious to communicate every possible blessing to the slaves, and the House ought to give to each other a mutual pledge to effect this object.— We lived in an age when the risks of discussion could not be avoided; but he trusted that the legislatures abroad would feel that the best chance of avoiding danger was, to enter into the feelings of their countrymen at home; and they might trust to it that there would be sufficient firmness and justice in the mother country to protect them. Of the meaning of the Registry there could be but one opinion; and he trusted that this unanimous opinion would soon be communicated to the West Indies, and acted upon accordingly.

To the same effect Mr. Canning remarked, that he had known, and there might again occur, instances of obstinacy in the Colonial Assemblies which left that House no choice but direct interference. Such conduct might now call for such an exertion on the part of the British Parliament; but all that he pleaded for was, that time should be granted, that they might know if the Colonial Assemblies would take upon themselves to do what that House was pleased to declare should be done. The present Address could not be misunderstood. It told the Colonial Assemblies — “You are safe for the present from the interference of the British Parliament, on the belief, and on the promise made for you, that, left to yourselves, you will do what is required of you.” To hold this language was sufficient. The Assemblies might be left to infer the consequences of refusal, and Parliament might rest satisfied with the consciousness that they held in their hands the means of accomplishing that which they had purposed.

In a subsequent discussion in the

House of Lords, Lord Holland remarked, that in his opinion there had been more prejudice against a Registry than the nature of the thing justified; but whatever might be the objection felt in the Colonies, it might be well for them to consider that it would be impossible for them to resist, and, if the thing was not done by them, it would be done for them.

This part of the discussion has been detached from every other, in order to give a clearer view than could otherwise be done of the real footing on which this great measure of policy, humanity, and justice now stands. A pledge has been given, that if the humane views of the British Nation are not carried into effect by the Colonial Legislatures, the Parliament of Great Britain will interpose its paramount and irresistible authority. This may be considered as a virtual engagement of Parliament, to interfere on the behalf of the negro population. We must reject all the lights of history and experience, before we can anticipate a cordial and effectual co-operation in the work of reform on the part of the colonial authorities. It is agreed, however, that the experiment should be once more tried; and happy will it be if that experiment should succeed. If it fails, then we have the solid ground of reliance arising from the deliberate declaration of his Majesty's Government, and, as far as that can be given, from a solemn pledge on the part of the British Parliament, that the condition of our slave population will occupy their early and earnest solicitude.

It is not intended to enter fully here into a statement of the arguments which were adduced on this great subject, when on the 19th of June, the day already alluded to, it was brought under the view of the House of Commons. The West Indians, as a matter of course, charged the friends of the Registry Bill with contributing to kindle the

some of insurrection—with what justice has been already considered. One gentleman attributed the outrages which had been committed at Barbadoes, to the doctrines disseminated in certain publications in this country. But he did not attempt to shew that a single slave in Barbadoes had access, directly or indirectly, to the works which he quoted; or were ever likely to hear of them, except possibly from the report of his speech in the West-India newspapers. To suppose that the Negroes there, who can neither read nor write, and who have no means of communicating with England, should be supplied with the periodical publications of the day, will appear, to all who know any thing of the West Indies, to be an absurdity of so gross a kind, that it may fairly be inferred that the West Indians must have found themselves miserably at a loss for evidence to substantiate their charges against the friends of the Registry Bill, when they were compelled to resort to such an argument as this.

Another West-Indian planter contradicted, in the most positive terms, the affirmation of Mr. Wilberforce, that it had often been made the subject of grave deliberation in the West Indies, whether the buying or the breeding system was most advantageous. He even asserted, that if any man had dared to breach such a discussion in the West Indies, he would have been kicked out of society. So confident was he on this point, that he seemed to stake the whole question on that single fact. Let the reader only turn to a work by a West-Indian planter, a Dr. Collins, who passed many years of his life in the West-Indies, and was also an enemy to the abolition of the slave trade. It is entitled "Practical Rules for the Management and Medical Treatment of Negro Slaves, in the Sugar Colonies; by a professional Planter." In this work he will find the following

passage:—"It has been asserted that the facility of obtaining slaves by purchase hath had the effect of rendering the West-India planters less attentive to their increase by procreation, than they otherwise would have been, if they had had their own stock only to depend upon; and that it was with them a matter of calculation, whether it were not cheaper to buy new Negroes than to wait their tardy generation through all the stages of pregnancy and infancy, at an expense more than equal to their value, when arrived at any degree of maturity for labour." Now what does this West-Indian planter, this advocate for the slave trade, state in reply? He says, "So far as this charge goes, I know not that it hath been altogether without foundation; as I preserve a faithful remembrance of the subject having been agitated in companies when I was present, and that the weight of argument was thought to preponderate greatly on the side of purchase."—This however, is but one out of many proofs to the same effect. The single fact, indeed, would be decisive of the argument, that although for twenty years West-Indians contended for the continuance of the slave trade, on the ground, that the number of female slaves in the islands was disproportionably small, and although each successive cargo that arrived was composed of a considerably greater number of men than women; yet, to the latest period of the existence of that trade, young men uniformly bore a higher price in the market than young women.

One or two speakers were disposed to charge the Missionaries with having been active in fomenting insurrection, but without the shadow of proof. Lord Castlereagh admitted, that no complaint to that effect had at all reached his Majesty's Government.

Great praise was bestowed by the West-Indians on the members of their own body, as having done

all they could do to promote the well-being of their slaves. Doubtless, there are many who have done much. But, at least, this cannot be affirmed of the local legislature of Barbadoes; who, though summoned to the work of reformation at different periods during the last twenty years, by the highest authorities in the empire, have limited their labours in this line of legislation to the single oppressive enactment to which we have already adverted.

The friends of the Registry Bill not only triumphantly repelled every charge which was brought against the Registry Bill, or its advocates, as in any way conducing to disturb the tranquillity of the

West-Indies, but established, on irrefragable grounds, the absolute necessity of that measure, not only to the effectual abolition of the slave trade, but to the peace, safety, and prosperity of our possessions in that quarter. They shewed it to be the very measure best calculated to avert insurrection, by leading to tranquil and gradual reform.

It may be right to advert for one moment to a ridiculous account which appeared in the newspapers, that a Haytian fleet had been seen steering towards Barbadoes at the time the insurrection broke out. The account is not only incredible in itself, but absolutely untrue, and even destitute of any colour of semblance of truth.

NOTE to p. 3.—“ In some papers presented to the House of Commons on the 25th of February, 1805, is contained a letter from Lord Seaforth, the Governor of Barbadoes, dated 13th November, 1804, in which he thus writes to Earl Camden:—

“ I inclose four papers containing, from different quarters, reports on the horrid murders I mentioned in some former letters. *They are selected from a great number, among which there is not one in contradiction of the horrible facts, though several of the letters are very concise and defective. The truth is, that nothing has given me more trouble than to get at the bottom of these businesses, so horribly absurd are the prejudices of the people;* (not of one or two, or of a few individuals, but of the PEOPLE.)

“ In a subsequent letter, dated 7th January, 1805, his lordship thus writes— ‘ I inclose the Attorney General’s letter to me on the subject of the Negroes so most wantonly murdered. I am sorry to say SEVERAL OTHER INSTANCES OF THE SAME BARBARITY have occurred, with which I have not troubled your lordship, as I only wished to make you acquainted with the subject in general.’

“ The letters to which Lord Seaforth refers, and which accompany the above extracts, are from four of the most respectable individuals in the island of Barbadoes, viz. Mr. Ince, the President of the Council; Mr. Coulthurst, the Advocate General; Mr. Beccles, the Attorney General; and the Rev. Mr.

Pilgrim. These gentlemen all agree in the material facts of the cases which they state. It would, therefore, be an unnecessary repetition to transcribe the whole of their letters: it will be sufficient to give the substance of the statements which they contain.

“ 1. On the 18th of April, 1804, a militia man of the name of Halls, of the St. Michael’s regiment, returning from military duty, overtook on the road some Negroes who were going quietly home from their labour. When he came near he called out that he would kill them, and immediately began to run after them. The Negroes not supposing that he really intended to do them any injury, and imagining that he was in joke, did not endeavour to escape, but merely made way for him. The person nearest to him happened to be a woman, the property of a Mr. Clarke, the owner of Simmons’s estate, who is stated to have been a valuable slave, the mother of five or six children, and far advanced in pregnancy. *Without the smallest provocation of any kind, Halls coolly and deliberately plunged his bayonet several times into her body, when the poor creature dropped and expired without a groan.* Two gentlemen were eye-witnesses of this horrid action. One of them, Mr. Harding, the manager of the Codrington College estate, went up to Halls and spoke harshly to him, and said he ought to be hanged, for he never saw a more unprovoked murder, and that he would certainly carry him before a magistrate. Halls’s reply is

very remarkable. 'For what?' said he (with the utmost indifference as to the crime)—'for what? FOR KILLING A NEGRO!!!' This is a short but a significant sentence, strongly confirming an important truth which has frequently been asserted, viz. that the Negroes are regarded by their white-skinned oppressors as an inferior order of beings, and, under the influence of this sentiment, are naturally enough denied the common rights of humanity, and excluded from the pale of that sympathy which a sense of a common nature and a common extraction is calculated to inspire. Mr. Harding, however, greatly to his credit, was proof against the force of Halls's compendious reasoning; and having procured assistance laid hold of him, and carried him before Mr. Justice Walton. Mr. Justice Walton, it would appear, was not indisposed to use the authority with which he was vested in bringing Halls to justice; but he found, that 'in his situation as a magistrate, the law of the island gave him no jurisdiction or authority over him,' and, in short, that he had no right to commit him. In this dilemma, Mr. Walton applied to Mr. President Ince. 'I told Mr. Walton,' says the President, in his letter to Lord Seaforth, 'that I regretted with real concern, the deficiency in our law; but that there was a penalty due to the king in such cases,' (viz. the ELEVEN POUNDS FOUR SHILLINGS); 'and that, as Mr. Harding had sufficiently substantiated the fact, I would order him to be committed till he paid the forfeiture, or a suit should be commenced against him.' Accordingly he was sent to prison.

"2. The second instance produced by Lord Seaforth is not inferior in atrocity to the first. A Mr. Colbeck, who lives overseer on Cabbage-tree plantation, in St. Lucy's parish; 'had bought a new Negro Boy out of the yard,' (meaning the slave yard where Negroes are exposed to sale, in the same manner as the cattle and sheep in Smithfield market), and carried him home. Conceiving a liking to the boy, he took him into the house and made him wait at table. Mr. Crone, the overseer of Rowe's estate, which is near to Cabbage-tree plantation, was in the habit of visiting Mr. Colbeck, had noticed the boy and knew him well. A fire happening one night in the neighbourhood, Colbeck went to give his assistance, and the boy followed him. Colbeck, on his return home, missed the boy, who had lost his way; and as he did not make

his appearance the next day, he sent round to his neighbours, and particularly to Crone, informing them, that his African lad had strayed, that he could not speak a word of English, and possibly he might be found breaking some sugar canes, or taking something else for his support: in which case he requested they would not injure him, but send him home, and he would pay any damage the boy might have committed. After a lapse of two or three days, the poor creature was discovered in a gully (or deep water course) near to Rowe's estate; and a number of Negroes were soon assembled about the place. The boy naturally terrified with the threats, the noise, and the appearance of so many people, retreated into a hole in a rock, having a stone in his hand, for the purpose, probably, of defence. By this time Crone, and some other White persons, had come up. By their orders a fire was put to the hole where the boy lay, who, when he began to be scorched, ran from his hiding place into a pool of water which was near. Some of the Negroes pursued him into the pool; and the boy, it is said, threw the stone which he held in his hand at one of them. On this, two of the White men, Crone and Hollingsworth, fired at the boy several times with shot, and the Negroes pelted him with stones. He was at length dragged out of the pool in a dying condition; for he had not only received several bruises from the stones, but his breast was so pierced with the shot that it was like a cullender. The White savages (this is the language of Mr. Attorney General Beccles) ordered the Negroes to dig a grave. Whilst they were digging it, the poor creature made signs of begging for water, which was not given to him: but as soon as the grave was dug, he was thrown into it and covered over, and, as is believed, WHILE YET ALIVE. Colbeck, the owner of the boy, hearing that a Negro had been killed, went to Crone to inquire into the truth of the report. Crone told him, that a Negro had been killed and buried, but assured him it was not his, for he knew him well, and he need not be at the trouble of opening the grave. On this, Colbeck went away SATISFIED! Receiving, however, further information, he returned and had the grave opened, when he found the murdered Negro to be his own. Colbeck brought his action of damages in the courts of the island against Crone and Hollingsworth. The cause was ready to be tried, and the Court had met for the purpose, when

they thought proper to pay double the value of the boy, and 25*l.* for the use of the island, (being 5*l.* less than the penalty fixed by law, of 15*l.* currency each), rather than suffer the business to go to a hearing. 'This, I am truly sorry to say,' observes the Advocate General, '*was the only punishment which could be inflicted for so barbarous and atrocious a crime.*'

"This horrid recital (which is given almost in the words of the Report, merely avoiding repetitions) seems to require little comment. One circumstance of it, however, may not strike the minds of some readers with its due force, although it appears to be the most affecting part of the whole case. Colbeck, it is said, on hearing that it was not his slave who had been murdered, WENT AWAY SATISFIED! O most opprobrious satisfaction! The preceding part of the narrative had prepared us to expect in Colbeck some approximation to European feeling. But what is the fact? On being coolly told that a Negro had been killed and buried—told so by his neighbour, the murderer—is he shocked? Does he express any horror or indignation on the occasion? No! he goes away satisfied!! Let the reader give its due weight to this one circumstance, and he must be convinced that a state of society must exist in the West Indies of which, as an inhabitant of this happy island, he can scarcely form any adequate conception. Suppose, instead of a Negro Slave, that it had been a horse which had been thus killed; Colbeck, had his horse happened to be missing at the time, would have pursued exactly the same steps, and would have been affected in the same way as in the present instance.—We may also learn, from this impressive circumstance, the value of West-Indian testimony when given in favour of West-Indian humanity. The moral perceptions and feelings which prevail in that quarter of the world, it will be perceived, are wholly different from those on this side of the Atlantic. It may be allowed that these men mean what they say, when they give each other the praise of humanity. But examine their standard. Who is this man of humanity? It is one, who, hearing that a fellow-creature has been cruelly

and wantonly murdered, *goes away satisfied*, because he himself has sustained no loss by the murder! An exception may be admitted in favour of a few men of enlightened minds; but the remark applies to the *people*—to the bulk of the community, whose prejudices are stated by Lord Seaforth to be so *horribly absurd*, as to resist all measures for remedying this dreadful state of things. But not to detain the reader any longer with reasonings on this subject, let us proceed to the third case communicated by Lord Seaforth, and which, if possible, is worse than either of the foregoing.

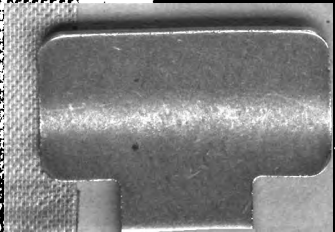
"3. A man of the name of Nowell, who lives in St. Andrew's parish, had been in the habit of behaving brutally towards his wife, and one day went so far as to lock her up in a room, and confine her in chains. A negro woman belonging to this man, *touched with compassion for her unfortunate mistress*, undertook privately to release her. Nowell found it out, and in order to punish her, obliged her to put her tongue through a hole in a board, to which he fastened it on the opposite side with a fork, and left her in that situation for some time. He afterwards cut out her tongue nearly by the root, in consequence of which she almost instantly died. No punishment followed this monstrous act of barbarity.

"It will, doubtless, be argued, that individual instances of cruelty like those which have been cited, are no proofs of *general inhumanity*, any more than the annals of the Old Bailey can be considered as exhibiting a fair view of our national character. There is, however, this very remarkable difference in the two cases, a difference which is fatal to the argument. In this country, when we read of crimes, we read of their being followed by just retribution; by severe and exemplary punishment. In the West Indies, on the contrary, we not only hear of the greatest crimes escaping with impunity, but we find the laws themselves conspiring to shelter criminals from justice: we find the most respectable and enlightened part of the community sanctioning the perpetration even of murder, by their refusal to recognize the commission of it as a felonious act."—*Debates on the Slave Trade*, 1806; *Appendix*.

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