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THE
IMPOLICY AND INJUSTICE
OF
EMANCIPATING
THE
NEGRO SLAVES
IN
THE WEST INDIA COLONIES.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY THOMAS DAVISON, WHITEFRIARS.

EMANCIPATION

OF THE

NEGRO SLAVES

IN THE

WEST INDIA COLONIES

CONSIDERED,

WITH REFERENCE TO ITS IMPOLICY AND INJUSTICE;

IN ANSWER TO

MR. WILBERFORCE'S APPEAL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

'A STATEMENT OF THE CLAIMS OF THE WEST INDIA COLONIES
TO A PROTECTING DUTY AGAINST EAST INDIA SUGAR.'

No. I.



//..

LONDON:

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1824.

IMPOLICY AND INJUSTICE
OF
EMANCIPATING
THE
NEGRO SLAVES.

WHAT would an intelligent public think and say of any man, who, in discussing the religious tenets or the political immunities of any of the numerous sects that swarm in the sun-shine of our latitudinarian system,—of the Quakers, for instance, or the Jumpers,—the Methodists, or any other self-styled Evangelical sectarians—should preface his observations with some such overflow of righteous gall as the following :

‘ To all the inhabitants of the British Empire who
‘ value the favour of God, or are alive to the interests or
‘ honour of their country ; to all who have any respect for
‘ religion, or any love for consistency, I would solemnly
‘ address myself. I call upon them, as they shall here-
‘ after answer, in the great day of account, for the use
‘ they shall have made of any power or influence with
‘ which Providence may have intrusted them, to employ
‘ their best endeavours, by all lawful and constitutional
‘ means, to discountenance, and, as soon as may be safely

‘ done, to root out the system of cant that overspreads the
 ‘ land ; a system of the grossest hypocrisy, of the most
 ‘ heathenish irreligion, of the most unprecedented affect-
 ‘ ation, and flagrant disingenuousness ?’

Would not all reasonable persons be disposed to throw aside such a pamphlet, as the production of an intemperate enthusiast, whose only aim must be to excite a spirit of intolerance against a particular portion of his fellow-subjects ? Would they give the writer credit for being actuated by the mild spirit of Christianity, of which he should declare himself the advocate in such a work ? Or if, in the discussion of our present subject, we should resort to such expedients, could we hope to engage the attention of dispassionate readers ? Such, however, ‘ *mutatis tantum pedibus numerisque,*’ is the language, in which Mr. Wilberforce opens his last attack against the West Indian communities, by way of prelude to the new measure of emancipation to the Negro slaves in the British Colonies*.

* ‘ To all the inhabitants of the British Empire who
 ‘ value the favour of God, or are alive to the interests or
 ‘ honour of their country ; to all who have any respect
 ‘ for justice, or any feelings of humanity, I would so-
 ‘ lemnly address myself. I call upon them, as they shall
 ‘ hereafter answer, in the great day of account, for the

We are sorry to observe in his APPEAL a repetition of almost all the epithets, by which he has stigmatized the West India Legislatures in every speech he has ever delivered in Parliament, and in all the numerous publications of the African Institution, whenever he has advocated any measure affecting the property and character of the colonies. Yet he declares, that he ‘comes reluctantly forward in this arduous cause, too surely anticipating from experience, that the grossest and most unfounded calumnies will be poured out against him *!’ Any person unread in the West India controversies would imagine from this, that Mr. Wilberforce, the mild and temperate advocate of his favoured cause, was a most persecuted and calumniated individual, whose philanthropic character had been loaded with unjust asper-

‘use they shall have made of any power or influence with which Providence may have intrusted them, to employ their best endeavours, by all lawful and constitutional means, to mitigate, and, as soon as it may be safely done, to terminate the Negro slavery of the British Colonies; a system of the grossest injustice, of the most heathenish irreligion and immorality, of the most unprecedented degradation, and unrelenting cruelty.’—*Appeal on behalf of the Negro Slaves*, p. 1.

* *Appeal*, p. 76.

sions, as the result of his disinterested exertions on behalf of the Negro race;—and be led to think, that he had himself abstained from the calumnies he deprecates in others, while the Colonist answered all his reasoning by mere clamour and abuse.

We may venture, however, to say that few men have dealt out so hard a measure of persevering obloquy to the institutions he contends against, and have yet been answered with greater forbearance by those, who are the objects of his attack.

Can he have forgotten his own and Mr. Stephen's reproaches against the 'hypocrisy of 'the iniquitous laws*,' 'the little juntos of slave 'masters †,' 'the white mob,' 'the West Indian 'aristocracy,' 'the petty, contumacious law- 'givers ‡;' and in this his own last work, 'the 'white oppressors and the white savages,' &c. of the Colonies? Does he not bear in mind the discussions on the Registry Bill, the annual Reports, and the tracts of the African Institution, of which he is the Vice-President and the leading Director, wherein so many statements and reasonings were advanced with the desire of

* Reasons for a Registry Bill, p. 43.

† Defence of the Registry Bill, p. 17.

‡ Reasons for a Registry Bill, p. 49.

establishing against the West Indian Islands the unfounded charge, of encouraging an unlawful importation of slaves?

If it were worth our while, or we were disposed to recriminate, we should have no difficulty in proving, that the public and private acts of this association have been wholly adverse to the trusts reposed in it; and that, amongst others, which ought to be, and we hope one day will be, brought to light, the funds intended for the benefit of Africa have been perverted to the purpose of printing these very calumnies for ‘**DISTRIBUTION IN THE WEST INDIES!**’—but we abstain from such a course of retributive crimination, and only desire is, that the spirit and temper of the champions in this ‘*great and holy cause*’ should be duly estimated. We are entering on a controversy of deep national importance, (‘an awful subject,’ to use the language of Mr. Burke, ‘or there is none so on this side of the grave,’) in which not only the security of some of the most valuable of the British possessions, and the lives of many thousand individuals are implicated, but the happiness also of that class, which appears exclusively to interest the feelings of modern philanthropists—the Negro slaves themselves. It is to the facts and arguments of the question more immediately before us, that the present observations are addressed.

Injurious as the attacks upon the character of the Colonies may have been, this is not the occasion for a warm expression of feelings, which, however justifiable and natural, would only tend to embarrass a just cause, and to impede that temperate and rational discussion, which is so desirable. That the subject itself has difficulties,—and those of no slight weight,—that every call of national interest and individual welfare demands the most dispassionate and mature deliberation, must have now become the conviction of every man, not wilfully blind to passing events:—but these difficulties are rather increased than obviated, and this deliberation impeded, by intemperate and mutual reproaches, which naturally disincline the general class of readers from entering into the full merits of the case.

Before, however, we proceed to the leading purposes of this address, it may be expedient to advert to what cannot be otherwise designated than the affectation of candour, by which the advocates of emancipation endeavour to palliate their calumnies against those, who are so deeply interested in this cause. The truth must be told, and the public must judge whether they have met this question in the fair spirit of liberality and forbearance; and for this purpose we shall examine one only of

the many pamphlets, published by Mr. Wilberforce and his followers: it happens to be the first that falls under our notice in a thick octavo, bound up with many others emanating from the same press, and all of which afford equally choice specimens of the peculiar character of writing to which we allude. It is a Report of the African Institution, published by order of that society; and after charging the Colonies with a notorious participation in the illegal traffic in slaves, with having encouraged this ‘detestable species of smuggling,’ and entertaining ‘a general consciousness, that they ‘have a potential resource in the clandestine ‘importation of negroes*’;’ it boldly declares, that ‘they have *every where* subjected their ‘slaves† to a most needless, unjust, and unmerciful aggravation of their lot, *peculiar to the British Colonies.*’

‘The same is the opprobrious truth (it proceeds) as to every other legal reformation, that is necessary to promote the native increase of the slaves, and meliorate their condition. Nothing, in short, has even been ostensibly attempted, but that which the Assemblies have admitted to be impracticable, and which every reflecting mind must perceive to be so‡—the protection

* Reasons for a Registry, p. 31.

† Ibid, p. 37.

‡ Ibid, p. 37.

‘ of the slaves against domestic oppression in the exercise of the master’s power.’

It then goes on to say, that

‘ For this idle purpose mock laws have been made, been laughed at, and forgot* ; and men who dare not complain, who are incompetent to prosecute, and whose evidence cannot be received in any court against any free person, are referred to the law for redress, *when in the bosom of the master’s domain they are not sufficiently fed, are worked to excess, or receive more than a limited number of lashes at any one time.*

‘ The Assemblies have not only continued, but in some Colonies have very recently originated laws † calculated to perpetuate slavery by obstructing manumission.’ ‘ In what country accursed with slavery is this sinking fund of mercy, this favour of the laws to human redemption, taken away? Where, by an opprobrious reversal of legislative maxims ancient and modern, do the lawgivers rivet, instead of relaxing, the fetters of private bondage, stand between the slave and the liberality of his master by prohibiting enfranchisements ‡, and labour as much as in them lies to make that dreadful odious state of man, which they have formed, eternal? Shame and horror must not deter us from revealing the truth: it is in the dominions of Great Britain. This foul and cruel abuse of legislative power has been reserved for Assemblies boastful of an English

* Reasons for a Registry, p. 38.

† Ibid, p. 39.

‡ Ibid, p. 42.

‘ constitution, and convened by the British crown. Can
 ‘ the case be further aggravated? Yes; in the obstinate
 ‘ rejection of better principles, in a perverse opposition
 ‘ to the voice of a liberal age, and in the contumacy of
 ‘ these petty lawgivers towards the mother country which
 ‘ protects, and the parliament that has power to control
 ‘ them. Farther aggravation still may seem scarcely
 ‘ possible; yet such is to be found in the hypocrisy of
 ‘ some of these iniquitous laws. With the fraudulent
 ‘ design of concealing from European eyes their true
 ‘ principle, they lay a tax upon it heavy enough to in-
 ‘ sure, generally speaking, the same effect; and pretend,
 ‘ that the object is to prevent free coloured persons be-
 ‘ coming chargeable to their parishes or the public. The
 ‘ pretence is not only false, but inconsistent with no-
 ‘ torious truth* : this cruel mockery must enhance the
 ‘ pain of the oppressor †.’

As if all this were insufficient, it charges
 ‘ the Colonial Legislatures with being adverse,
 ‘ or indifferent, in general, to the cause of
 ‘ Christianity.’ ‘ No Act of Assembly,’ it
 states, ‘ can be shown, which has redeemed our
 ‘ Islands in any degree from the reproach of
 ‘ their former gross neglect in the restraint of
 ‘ polygamy: on the contrary, laws have been
 ‘ passed aggravating that sin by positive ob-
 ‘ structions to the pious purpose of a master,
 ‘ who should desire to reform the manners and

* Reasons for a Registry, p. 43.

† Ibid, p. 44.

‘ morals of his slaves by the means which Christianity affords. In some of our Colonies, at least, and Jamaica in particular, laws have been passed opposing positive prohibitions to the only attainable means of religious instruction and worship*.’

This language, from a pen, such as that of Carlile or his associates, would scarcely have excited a moment’s surprise; but it seems scarcely credible, that a community of English Gentlemen, some of whom are Members of the House of Commons, and all professing to have in view the purposes of charity, and of civilizing Africa, should have so far forgotten what was due to their own character as to sanction these calumnies †.

Yet Mr. Wilberforce,—after such a tissue of accusations, deliberately brought against the whole of the West Indian communities, and

* Reasons for a Registry, p. 47.

† We know, that the great body of the Directors and Subscribers of the African Institution must have been, and perhaps are now, ignorant that such pamphlets as these are published under the sanction of their names: but they are in no small degree responsible for the effects these have produced, so long as they contribute to the support of such a Society; and we appeal to them, whether they ought longer to countenance the dangerous and intemperate counsels, which influence its measures.

when, in this his APPEAL, he assumes to give what he calls ‘his last finishing tint to the ‘dark colouring* of the picture’ of this ‘mass ‘of aggravated enormities;’—after declaring, that ‘prudence and foresight can effect little ‘in opposition to the stubborn prejudices†, ‘strong passions, and inveterate habits, that ‘prevail in our West Indian Assemblies;’ that ‘he knows not any vice of the system that has ‘been rooted out‡, or any material improve- ‘ment that has been adopted, and that these ‘abuses are still existing in all their original ‘force;’—in short, after repeating the worn-out diatribes to be found in all his former publica- tions, and having exhausted the treasury of his censures in this last liberal donative to the Colonists, pathetically exclaims that he ‘too ‘surely anticipates that the grossest and most ‘unfounded calumnies will be poured out ‘against him §!’

Gross and unfounded calumnies!’ We are compelled to throw back the charge, and confidently appeal to all dispassionate observers, whether the imputation attach to the West

* Appeal, p. 30.

† Appeal, p. 36.

‡ Appeal, p. 37.

§ Appeal, p. 36.

Indians, or to himself and those with whom he acts. Nor can the reader be deceived by the smooth and placid caution, which he ‘presumes ‘to interpose to his fellow-labourers in this ‘great cause, to join with him in treating the ‘character of the West India proprietors with ‘candour and tenderness *.’ Mild words and gentle these! by way of epilogue to his ‘AP-PEAL on behalf of the Negro Slaves’ *against their Masters*, which are to sweeten the bitter cup so often forced to the lips of the Colonists, to heal the wounds inflicted on them by an unsparing hand, and to secure for the author the pious prayer of his readers, as they close the book, that this enlightenéd martyr to the cause of the oppressed Africans may meet with the *same* candour, and be treated with the *same* tenderness, which he declares ‘he has ever ‘wished to keep in remembrance and observe ‘in practice!’

But all this, amiable and candid as it may appear, will not obliterate the record of his grave and repeated accusations against the Assemblies: these are become matter of history; they have been disseminated both here and in the West Indies with fatal activity, and he can-

* Appeal, p. 76.

not recede from them. If they are true, let it not be said, that the misdeeds of the Colonies have been treated with tenderness; but if unfounded, which we hesitate not to declare, when did he ever speak and act towards them with the ‘consideration and becoming candour*,’ to which he would lay claim?

These fair set terms remind us of some of the writings of Mr. Stephen, equally calculated to establish *his* claim also to self-devotion in the cause of philanthropy. The most remarkable of these is a speech, which he delivered in 1817, at the annual meeting of the African Institution, at the Freemasons’ Tavern, and afterwards published for the edification of those, who might not have been fortunate enough to hear this noblest declamation of so illustrious a teacher of morality. Not the tenth part of the epithets applied to the Colonial Legislatures in this production could have been tolerated in private society; but we presume the atmosphere in which philanthropy breathes is an attenuating medium; and has the property of imparting a sublimated quality to that which, in ordinary cases,

Bœotum in crasso jurares aëre natum.

Whatever, therefore, under these exhilarating influences, proceeds from Mr. Stephen, as an

* Appeal, p. 77.

African Director, may be considered the standard of Attic refinement and propriety: for instance, it is very elegant and consistent too, at least with his other writings, to accuse those, 'who have the misfortune,' as Mr. Wilberforce says, to be connected with the colonial system, of 'malice, venom,' 'notorious jacobinism, inhuman spirit of legislation,' 'of acts which it is impossible for an Englishman to read without a blush of shame and indignation,' 'monstrous conclusions,' 'slandrous inferences,' 'distortion of facts,' 'licentiousness of assertion,' 'false statements,' 'insatiable appetite for defamation,' 'false pretences,' 'arrant trifling,' 'strange calumnious tales,' 'audacity,' 'effrontery,' 'rancorous hostility and hatred,' 'base fanaticism,' 'fell enthusiasm,' &c.* All this is no doubt very elegant, consistent, and so on;—very becoming in a Master in Chancery, to step from his official seat, to throw off his judicial gravity and temper, mount the rostrum at a tavern, and, in the true spirit of '*candour and tenderness*,' thus to designate a numerous, most important, and powerful class of his fellow-subjects.—Very philanthropic all this! and no doubt equally in good taste to address it to the ears of His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, who is President of this notable Society, and to whose family the Colonists have ever

* Mr. Stephen's speech *passim*.

testified the most unshaken and loyal attachment.

His Royal Highness must have been not a little startled to hear the "Assemblies and their Agents" stigmatized in the following 'candid and tender' strains:

' *Theirs* was the base fanaticism, the fell enthusiasm
' of an avarice which knew no pity; which blindly
' and ferociously pursued its object through every
' fence, that the laws of nature or of God, the terrors
' of conscience, or the revoltings of instinctive human
' sympathy opposed to it. *Theirs* was the jacobinism,
' which propagated and maintained, and strove to per-
' petuate a ferocious anarchy, not in one kingdom or
' nation, but over a whole continent, the fourth divi-
' sion of the world. *They* were the Septembrizers of
' every season, and of every village; the confiscators,
' not of gold and silver, but of bones and sinews, and
' of the rational will which gives them motion; the
' robbers and plunderers, not of churches and national
' domains, but of fathers and mothers, and wives and
' husbands, and children and brethren, torn from the
' arms of their shrieking correlatives, and hurried into
' interminable bondage. Couthon or Robespierre
' might have been appalled by the hold of a slave
' ship; but to the African jacobin its foulest exhala-
' tions are fragrance, and its deepest groans are music.
' They remind that sordid enthusiast, that covetous
' fanatic, only of the great number he has *slaved*, and
' on which he has to count his profits per poll in the
' West Indian shambles *.'

* Speech, page 9.

Such the language of this enlightened advocate of emancipation; such the temper which is to regulate and control the destinies of so many British subjects! To what frightful excesses must such a spirit as this transport the ignorant and unenlightened population, to whom, through the medium of innumerable active agents, it is assiduously conveyed! Thus are they taught to estimate the nature of their condition; and dangerous indeed must be the effect of such sentiments delivered, perhaps applauded, in the presence of a member of the Royal family, and many other distinguished individuals! If the good sense of the yet *unevangelized* portion of the community be not interposed to counteract, to discountenance, to repudiate such doctrines, it is clear, that those scenes of revolutionary carnage, which have but now been so providentially averted, will burst forth under this furious excitement;—unless indeed the Colonies be driven, in self-preservation, to expedients, which, in the present position of our interests in the American seas, would prove fatal to our national prosperity.

Yet after these, and many other equally classic effusions, Mr. Stephen assures us, that he has so great a regard for these ‘Septembrizers,’ these ‘confiscators of bones and sinews,’ these ‘sordid enthusiasts,’ these ‘co-

vetous fanatics,' these proprietors of 'West Indian shambles,'

'that instead of having any malicious desire to censure his fellow-subjects in the Colonies, he has perhaps felt too strong a disposition to spare them.—I know not,' he adds, 'why the contrary should be suspected, for there always have been, and are, persons dear to me by nature as well as friendship, who might naturally remark, on my censures of Colonial Slavery, 'in thus saying, thou reproachest us also *.'

Surely, it cannot be thought too severe a censure to designate this production as a violent and intemperate appeal to the passions of the ignorant! Or must we rather consider Mr. Stephen's declaration of his desire to 'spare' the British Colonies, representing a capital of one hundred millions, as a proof of his modest assurance and amiable disposition? and that with his 'forbearance,' and Mr. Wilberforce's 'candour and tenderness,' the West Indians are guarded with a shield of 'triple brass?' No! the Colonists disclaim such hollow professions; they feel justly indignant at the injurious aspersions thus profusely cast upon them, and demand a full investigation of their truth or falsity. It is too late to talk of 'candour and forbearance:'

* Defence of the Registry Bill.—Letter the First, p. 32.

they shrink not from the light—but, confident in the justice of their cause, they trust to the good sense and dispassionate judgment of their countrymen, utterly to discredit these bold accusations, and to rescue their valuable possessions from the danger which threatens them.

We hope in our future numbers to prove, upon the most indisputable authority, that the condition of the slaves is not only not so afflictive as the agitators of this question have thus ignorantly declared it to be, but that they were a happy and contented race *until instigated to think otherwise* ; and that their present moral condition exhibits a more rapid progress from Paganism to Christianity than has been effected in any other country, where the light of revelation has had to dispel the darkness of ancient and hereditary superstitions.

But we will not anticipate this part of our case, and ought, perhaps, to apologise to the reader for having so long delayed to carry him to the professed object of these tracts—the question of Emancipation: yet it appeared at once just and expedient to show that, whilst it is proposed to deprive the Colonists of the legal possession of their property, their characters have been made the object of a most wanton and cruel attack by the very party, who might

reasonably be supposed to feel some compunction at adding insult to injury.

It is scarcely necessary, in this stage of the West Indian controversy, to enter into any detail of the measures which the advocates of Emancipation are desirous to establish; they may be defined in few words, namely—that all slaves in the West India Colonies, the property of British subjects,—purchased by and secured to them under the sanction of numerous acts of the legislature, passed for the benefit of the trade of this country,—shall be forcibly, and against the will of their owners, placed in a condition of absolute freedom; and that the period when, and the regulations under which, the measure is to be accomplished, shall be determined by the British Parliament.

When it is considered, that this involves an entire revolution in the political state of distant possessions, infinitely valuable to this country in their natural resources,—and in the very position which they occupy, as a connecting link between the old and the new world,—the statesman will naturally approach such a subject with no ordinary feelings of caution and reserve. He will weigh the problematical good to be gained by the change with some misgiving jealousy; and,

should he find that it is in no degree commensurate with the difficulties and dangers it involves, he will be slow to put to the hazard of so great an experiment the advantages, which these establishments under the existing system afford; and he will not fail to give their due weight to the instances of its fatal results in other countries *under circumstances almost precisely similar*.

With equal caution the moral philosopher and the philanthropist, viewing a state of society,—where 800,000 human beings are emerging from a savage state of barbarism and Pagan darkness to the light of Christian revelation,—where a growing spirit of liberality on the part of the governing, and a happy improvement in civilization amongst the governed, are gradually but securely working to the prosperity and happiness of both,—will pause ere they endeavour to precipitate the natural progress of society; and will bear in mind—what the example of all ages has proved—that civil discord and mutual jealousy between the different gradations of society are the greatest impediments to all rational improvement.

Nor will every member of a free state, who values the quiet possession of the fruits of his own labour, and knows that injustice inflicted upon any one individual of the community may be made a precedent against his own privileges,

be less cautious how he gives his voice for the oppression of a numerous class of his fellow subjects; or justifies any measures, involving the sacred right of property,—of extensive and vested interests,—and which may expose even their lives to danger, in the speculative hope that a new order of society may be benefited at their expense.

Again, an enlightened Parliament, at once the fruit and the support of a happy constitution,—established by the spirit of a free people, and sanctified through many ages by the blessings it has secured to them,—will never desire to exercise its power unjustly over inferior but legally constituted authorities; to disfranchise them of those privileges, which it has so often recognised; or by any arbitrary proceedings, to contravene that great principle of English liberty, that no subject of the realm can be injured either in his property or possessions, unless by the process of laws, to which his own consent has been given by his representatives in Parliament.

Above all, the Sovereign of a great country like this, where so many different and apparently conflicting interests work out the common benefit of all,—who has sworn to observe the Great Charter, and the Bill of Rights, under which the property of every man, legally ac-

quired, is secured to him and his heirs;—whose ancestors have granted, and who has himself confirmed, the minor charters under which the Colonies entered into compact with the Crown, —will not readily permit that the inhabitants of these settlements, who have ever been devoted in their attachment to his person, should be divested of their immunities and estates.

But all these considerations of prudence and justice will acquire additional force, when it is remembered, that so great a revolution of our colonial system is recommended to us by a set of men, who have for many years taken infinite pains to combat the very principles on which they now endeavour to maintain its expediency. 'Tis no less true than strange, that these self-same agitators of the question have publicly recorded their sense of its danger and injustice; that it would 'be an act of such political insanity to emancipate our West Indian labourers, these poor pagan, timid, torpid, 'stupified negroes,' that the charge of such a design 'was to be believed by no man who 'could reason or read*.' Their declarations to this effect have been so repeatedly made, their reasoning on the subject so forcibly impressed upon us, their complaints of 'the artful and

* Mr. Stephen's Speech, p. 12.

‘calumnious imputations’ against them of a desire to free the slaves so loudly dinned in our ears, that we can scarcely believe it to be the same voice we now hear in every market-place, trumpeting forth the cry of emancipation.

We really do not desire to treat this grave question in any other than the sincere spirit of fair argument and reasoning, or unjustly to charge these gentlemen with inconsistency;—still less unjustly to impute to them any improper motives: we know that consistency is at all times a rare virtue, and that their hopes and fears, which are the universal springs of human action, regulate men as well in their views of state policy as of private interest. But what will be said when it is proved that Mr. Wilberforce,—who has for so many years devoted his almost exclusive attention to the subject of our West Indian colonies,—who claims to have an intimate knowledge of its intricacies, whilst he says, ‘the owners themselves of West Indian estates are utterly unacquainted with the true nature and practical character of the system,’—contradicts himself at every step? If it can be shown that he wavers in his own opinions, and disavows to-day the deliberate convictions of yesterday, we are justified in saying, that his reasoning loses much of its

authority, and that the merits of the question must be determined on surer grounds than the momentary and uncertain dreams of the visionary philanthropist.

To mark either the entire absence of all good faith, or the inconsistency,—the wandering, fluctuating principle,—of these politicians, who seem to delight in the wild and violent influences of their imagination, it is fit to refer to the language they used in regard to emancipation during the late discussions on the Registry bill. And to begin with Mr. Stephen;—when he stood forward in defence of the African Institution in 1817, with the express object of repelling ‘so preposterous’ a charge as the desire of giving freedom to the blacks by act of Parliament.

‘To regard,’ says he, ‘a bill for the registration of slaves as a parliamentary enfranchisement, *was a mistake too gross for ignorance to commit*, though not for art and malice to inculcate*. Yet this preposterous ground was taken in Barbadoes and other islands, against the Slave Register Bill. A design to emancipate the slaves was publicly and clamorously ascribed to us by the assemblies and planters. The charge, *though believed by no man who could reason or read*, was propagated without contradiction (for who in the West Indies durst publicly contradict it on our

* Speech, p. 11.

‘ behalf?) and was at length assumed as a known un-
 ‘ deniable truth. Not only in table talk, but in
 ‘ harangues, resolutions, and legislative reports, pub-
 ‘ lished in the insular Gazette, the *insidious falsehood*
 ‘ was spread abroad, and alarms were sounded as
 ‘ loudly through the Antilles, as if a parliamentary
 ‘ dissolution of slavery had been really at hand.

‘ All this, sir, we know was mere craft and artifice
 ‘ in our enemies. They wished to raise a general fer-
 ‘ ment in the West Indies, only that the noise of it in
 ‘ this country might assist them in defeating our bill ;
 ‘ and they did not expect that the stratagem would
 ‘ recoil upon themselves, as it unluckily did at Bar-
 ‘ badoes.

‘ To a man ignorant of the true state of the slaves
 ‘ in the Sugar Colonies, it must seem strange that such
 ‘ consequences were not foreseen, and were not general
 ‘ in the islands. What more natural than that the poor
 ‘ beings most interested in the fiction should believe
 ‘ and act upon it? WHAT MORE DANGEROUS THAN
 ‘ TO IMPRESS THEM WITH THE NOTION OF A GE-
 ‘ NERAL ENFRANCHISEMENT BEING INTENDED FOR
 ‘ THEM BY THE PROMOTERS OF AN IMPENDING ACT
 ‘ OF PARLIAMENT, of the benefit of which their ma-
 ‘ sters, full of alarm and consternation, were striving
 ‘ hard to deprive them? Why, sir, if any member of this
 ‘ Institution, or any man in the Colonies, engaged in
 ‘ the benevolent work of instructing the poor pagan
 ‘ negroes, had held out to them the same views which
 ‘ their masters and the assemblies there madly propa-
 ‘ gated, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN JUSTLY BRANDED AS

‘ AN INCENDIARY, AND PROSECUTED TO CONDIGN
‘ PUNISHMENT AS A MOVER OF SEDITION *.’

Well might Mr. Stephen ask ‘ what could
‘ be more dangerous than to impress the poor
‘ negroes with the notion of a general enfran-
‘ chisement being intended for them by the pro-
‘ moters of an impending act of Parliament?’
The insurrections in Barbadoes, and Demerara,
and the late attempt at revolt in Jamaica, the
confused and unsettled opinions of the slaves
throughout the whole Colonies, attest the truth
of this. What, then, must the advocates of
emancipation have to answer for, who, not con-
tent that this delicate and momentous question
should be discussed in Parliament, have, in the
prosecution of this very object, disseminated
their pamphlets throughout the empire; aye—
and in the West Indies too,—with an activity and
an effect that have shaken the Colonies to their
centre?

Let not these awful warnings be given to no
purpose: they are but the distant rolling of the
thunder storm, which ere long may burst upon
us with irresistible violence. Well might Mr.
Stephen say, ‘ if any friend of this (African)
‘ Institution had held out to the slaves such
‘ views, he should be justly branded as an in-
‘ cendiary.’ The friends of the West India

* Speech, p. 12.

cause seek not to brand any set of men as incendiaries ; they are not accustomed to deal in such language ; they leave it to the individuals themselves to designate their own acts, and to justify them if they can ; and are satisfied that the public should take their character from their own lips. ‘ Any men,’—observe, ‘ who should hold out to the slaves views of ‘ emancipation should be branded as incendiaries !’ and lo ! what have they done themselves ? what are they now doing every day, in public, in private, by speeches, pamphlets, propositions in Parliament, by petitions, as Mr. Baring said, *manufactured in London*, and sent down to all parts of the country for signatures ?

Well might Mr. Stephen say that ‘ *such men* ‘ should be prosecuted to condign punishment ‘ as movers of sedition !’ We will not take upon us to say how far this is practicable—we are no lawyers—Mr. Stephen is, and we are content to take his word for it ; but this we will venture to affirm ; that any man, or any set of men, who should use such inflammatory language (as may be found in almost all the pamphlets of the African Institution) on any subject connected with the administration of justice in this country, or who should in such round terms denounce ‘ the powers that be’ for so many crimes

revolting to human nature, would be *immediately* ‘prosecuted to condign punishment.’ ’Tis now but three short years or less, since a distinguished individual was imprisoned for writing a letter to his constituents on the disturbances at Manchester, which, in comparison of the publications we have quoted, was a model of temper and forbearance: and we have not yet forgotten that many other persons were ‘prosecuted to condign punishment’ for instilling into the minds of the lower orders in England an impatience of subordination, and a desire forcibly to secure to themselves certain supposed privileges, which happily the constitution does not recognize.

And, by the way, what was the conduct of Mr. Wilberforce and his friends on that occasion? They entertained so great a horror of *white* insurrection, and of any violent attempts on the part of *freemen* to extend their franchise against the existing law, that they were foremost in the ranks of those who were for extending the powers of the government, and for making new legislative enactments to repress all seditious movements. But change the *color* of the insurgents;—let *slaves* but attempt the ‘vindication of rights’ which they had never enjoyed,—and the whole question, with these gentlemen, assumes another character: then is the time to represent their

masters in the most odious colours ; no proposition then to strengthen the hands of the executive, but new reasons enforced,—on the ground of justice and humanity !—to give the slaves what they had never dreamt or thought of, until stimulated and deluded to the belief that it might contribute to their happiness !

But to return : strong as this disclaimer on the part of the Directors of the African Institution may appear, it is as nothing to what remains untold. One publication, however widely disseminated, is insufficient for the purpose ; the case demands ‘ another and another,’ that the truth may be universally known, and the grand principle recognised, on which the friends of the African race were to found their claim to public confidence. Accordingly Mr. Stephen addresses his friend and relative, Mr. Wilberforce, in two letters, by way of defence against the charge of their being Emancipationists.

‘ In addition,’ says he, ‘ to these old and new reasons ‘ for imputing to us bad motives in our Bill, we are ‘ found guilty, it seems, of the enormous crime of wishing that the slavery of our colonies may not be eternal*. It is, to be sure, not very obvious how the ‘ registration of men as slaves tends to make them free,

* Defence of the Registry Bill, p. 13.

‘ or how recording the master’s title renders it less secure. Certainly, if our design were to follow up this measure by a bill of general enfranchisement, or to effect by other means the termination of slavery, against the will of the masters, we have taken an odd way to our end. We record the rights of the owner in order to take them away. Their violation is to be facilitated by making them clear and notorious. We admit, however, nay we anxiously maintain, that in one view the Registry Bill has a happy though remote tendency to produce the termination of slavery*.’

He takes this occasion of repeating the old charges of inadequate supply of food and clothing, and the odious, cruel system of driving; all of which, upon the adoption of the Registry Bill, he says, will disappear, and give place to plans of benignant improvement; and then proceeds :

‘ When that grand reformation shall be accomplished, a new order of things will arise, in which native population will gradually become ample and redundant; and voluntary individual manumission, unless still restrained by barbarous laws †, will be felt to be as much for the interests of the master as for the welfare of the slave. These poor beings, in short, who are now on a level with the brutes, will rise first into manhood, and then imperceptibly into freedom. Raise them first to a condition as good as that of the ancient European

* Defence of the Registry Bill, letter the first, p. 14.

† Ibid. p. 15.

‘ slaves, and they will soon like them obtain liberty, NOT
 ‘ BY REVOLUTION, BUT BY THE PROGRESSIVE BOUNTY OF
 ‘ THEIR MASTERS. They will rise to it either by imme-
 ‘ diate and full enfranchisements, or gradually, through
 ‘ the ordinary intermediate states in agricultural bond-
 ‘ age—those of the adscript, the serf, and the territorial
 ‘ vassal.’

Here, then, is a plain and unequivocal avowal of their wishes—the pleasing prospect held out to us of ‘ voluntary individual manumission, ‘ which it will be the interest of the master to encourage’—of slaves ‘ imperceptibly rising into ‘ freedom,’ of ‘ liberty to be gained, not by revolution, but by the progressive bounty of ‘ their masters,’ and ‘ gradually through the ‘ ordinary intermediate states of agricultural ‘ bondage!’

But all this is not sufficiently forcible for Mr. Stephen. The reader will have already perceived that he is not in the habit of expressing himself by halves: we owe him thanks for this, and should be sorry not to do justice to his powerful language, which requires only to be read to illustrate the character of its author.

‘ *If our opponents,*’ he continues, ‘ *have changed their views, we have not changed ours.*’ ‘ It is not true that ‘ we have in any degree shifted our grounds: it is not ‘ true that we are aiming to give freedom to the slaves, ‘ except by the means which we always meditated and ‘ avowed. To use the words of that Report so loudly

‘arraigned by our opponents, we looked to an emancipation, of which not the slaves but the masters should be the willing instruments or authors.’

Yes, Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Brougham, and all the other gentlemen on that side of the argument, indignantly repelled the charge of wishing to abolish slavery by law:—they propose emancipation by legislative enactment! they harbour the intention of wresting from the subject his most valuable property, legally secured and transmitted for ages under the sanction of the law!—they so mad as to think that either the security of the Colonies or the happiness of the slaves, could be compatible with such a measure! They,—philanthropists, statesmen, legislators, masters in chancery, and yet so regardless of reason and justice!—no,—it was an ‘insidious, unfounded calumny, which no man who could read or reason would believe,’ and carried with it its own refutation! But that they might, once and for ever, repel this charge, it was thought desirable that, not only themselves, but all the principal ‘*amis des noirs*,’ should unite in a public declaration of their real sentiments; and accordingly, the African Institution published a report, which, fortunately for the interests of humanity, stands a never-dying record against them,—a sure test, by which we may try their consistency and enlightened views.

It is given in these remarkable words :

‘ Accused by their opponents of meditating a general
 ‘ emancipation, they denied the charge; but it was de-
 ‘ nied only in the insidious meaning of the imputation it-
 ‘ self. They did not aim at an emancipation to be
 ‘ effected by insurrection in the West Indies, or to be
 ‘ ordained precipitately by positive law ; but they never
 ‘ denied, or scrupled not to avow, that they did look
 ‘ forward to a future extinction of slavery in the Colo-
 ‘ nies, TO BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE SAME HAPPY MEANS
 ‘ WHICH FORMERLY PUT AN END TO IT IN ENGLAND ;
 ‘ namely, by a benign though insensible revolution in
 ‘ opinions and manners, by the encouragement of parti-
 ‘ cular manumissions, and the progressive melioration of
 ‘ the condition of the slaves, until it should slide insen-
 ‘ sibly into general freedom. THEY LOOKED, IN SHORT,
 ‘ TO AN EMANCIPATION, OF WHICH NOT THE SLAVES, BUT
 ‘ THE MASTERS SHOULD BE THE WILLING INSTRUMENTS
 ‘ OR AUTHORS.’—*Reasons for a Registry*, p. 8.

We entreat attention to these sentiments—
 ‘ THEY DO NOT AIM AT EMANCIPATION, TO BE OR-
 ‘ DAINED PRECIPITATELY BY POSITIVE LAW ; they
 ‘ look only to a future extinction of slavery, to
 ‘ BE ACCOMPLISHED BY THE SAME HAPPY MEANS,
 ‘ WHICH FORMERLY PUT AN END TO IT IN ENG-
 ‘ LAND, NAMELY, BY A BENIGN THOUGH INSENSI-
 ‘ BLE REVOLUTION IN OPINIONS AND MANNERS,
 ‘ BY PARTICULAR MANUMISSIONS, TILL IT SHOULD
 ‘ SLIDE INSENSIBLY INTO GENERAL FREEDOM ;
 ‘ to an emancipation, in short, of which NOT
 ‘ THE SLAVES BUT THE MASTERS SHOULD BE THE
 ‘ WILLING INSTRUMENTS.’

‘ In England,’ continues the Report, ‘ if it be asked
 ‘ what cause most powerfully contributed to the dissolu-
 ‘ tion of the degrading bondage of our ancestors, the
 ‘ answer must clearly be, the extreme favor shown to in-
 ‘ dividual enfranchisements, by the judges and the laws.
 ‘ That baneful growth of foreign conquest, or early bar-
 ‘ barism, villeinage, had nearly overspread the whole field,
 ‘ now covered with the most glorious harvest of liberty
 ‘ and social happiness that ever earth produced, and
 ‘ where not one specimen of the noxious weed remains :
 ‘ YET IT WAS NOT PLOUGHED UP BY REVOLUTION, OR
 ‘ MOWN DOWN BY THE SCYTHE OF A LEGISLATIVE ABO-
 ‘ LITION ; BUT WAS PLUCKED UP, STALK BY STALK, BY
 ‘ THE PROGRESSIVE HAND OF PRIVATE AND VOLUNTARY
 ‘ ENFRANCHISEMENT ; having ceased in England, only
 ‘ because the last slave at length obtained his manumis-
 ‘ sion, or died without a child.’—*Reasons, &c.* p. 40.

Now, in the name of consistency and fair reasoning, what does all this mean? Is man gifted with the power of speech, that he may express what he feels and knows? or is language, as it has been defined by a modern politician, the art of concealing our real intentions? We seriously ask again, what are we to think of all this? Is it to be believed that the same gentlemen, with these declarations yet warm upon their lips, should in the very next Parliament pronounce, ‘ That slavery is inconsistent with the
 ‘ principles of the British Constitution, and with
 ‘ the Christian religion,’ that ‘ it must be rooted
 ‘ out, mown down by the scythe of legislative
 ‘ abolition ;’ that ‘ a voice from Heaven speaks

‘ to us ;’ that ‘ we must not presume too far on the forbearance of the Almighty,’ but ‘ rescue our country from this guilt and this reproach ?’

And yet to such hands it is, that the task of legislating for the West Indies is to be committed—to such expositors of Colonial policy we are to refer for our guidance in one of the most difficult questions that was ever discussed in Parliament ! To these enlightened statesmen are to be confided the most valuable possessions of the British crown, which, if this country know not how to value them, are at least considered by every other power in Europe and America as the surest bulwark of our national greatness. To these consistent legislators we are to look for the definition of the rights of property, and of constitutional law. To these dispassionate and candid philanthropists are to be entrusted the regulations, under which an African population, of dispositions and character wholly different from our own, is to be elevated from ignorance and comparative barbarism to civilization—from Pagan superstition to the blessings of Christianity—from slavery to freedom !

The future historian, recording the events of the present day, will be at a loss to define the motives of Government, in conceding so much to a party in the House of Commons, equally unimportant in their number, and incongruous in the elements of their political union. Or should

he trace the secret springs of such policy, posterity will scarcely credit the fact, that a Minister of the Crown, whose peculiar province it is to watch over the interests of these communities, should have linked his political and official influence with the secret counsels of this party—should have submitted and surrendered himself up to their dictation, till, in pursuing their pernicious schemes, he has brought the British settlements to the very verge of destruction. Strange, indeed, it is, that this influence should have been exercised by individuals, who (whatever their personal respectability, which we do not for a moment question) are for the most part recognised either as open or disguised seceders from the established church; and of whom it is enough to say, that their avowed hostility to the Colonies should at least have inspired in his Lordship's mind some diffidence of their views and opinions.

The present insurrectionary spirit of the Negroes throughout the Colonies has at length, however, roused the country from its lethargy; and all classes, from one extremity to the other, are awakened to a sense of the impolicy of the resolutions adopted by the House of Commons in the last Session. They who are more immediately interested in the prosperity of these valuable Settlements, who have friends or estates that must be involved in immediate ruin by any

successful revolt of the slaves, stand appalled at the dangers which threaten them. The manufacturers who have been in the habit of exporting to them from four to six millions annually; the ship-owners, who have more than two hundred thousand tons of British shipping employed in this trade; the mercantile body, who have invested so many millions of capital on the faith of their security; all wait in anxious solicitude the result of these disorders. The more enlightened portion of his Majesty's Government, who cannot be insensible to the immense resources these Colonies afford of revenue, of patronage, and above all, of national power, desire, if possible, to retrace their steps: whilst all dispassionate persons, who have not yet forgotten that the wealth and prosperity of England depends on its commerce, its shipping, and its Colonies, are astonished that the persons thus often alluded to, should have acquired so fatal, though it is to be hoped so short-lived, an influence in the public counsels.

These last, the advocates for emancipation, contemplate with complacency the ruinous consequences of their own temerity; they have themselves admitted that, 'if the Negroes were told of a plan for their general emancipation by a superior power in England, and led to conclude that there is a violent contest on that point between their *patrons* here and the au-

‘thorities under which they live, it would not
 ‘be impossible that such extreme excitement
 ‘may have produced, *and may again produce,*
 ‘mischievous and fatal effects*.’ Yet that all
 this should create no ‘compunctious visitings,’
 might naturally move our wonder, had we
 not a declaration from their own lips, that
 they ‘look forward not only to the progress of
 ‘African freedom, but of AFRICAN SOVEREIGNTY
 ‘in the West Indies!’

‘Even now,’ say they, ‘a *Negro Empire* is rising in
 ‘the Charibbean seas in fearful strength and energy.
 ‘The slave-drivers of Jamaica may yet strut their hour
 ‘as legislators, and publish their childish boasts of in-
 ‘dependence; but they have, in King Christophe and
 ‘President Petion, near neighbours, who may, ere long,
 ‘if they had not the calls of mercy and justice, address
 ‘these blusterers in a style yet more peremptory than
 ‘their own†.’

And will the nation blindly follow the counsels of men who dare publicly to avow such doctrines? Will she yield up her most valuable Settlements to an ‘African Sovereignty’ or a ‘Negro Empire,’ at the instigation of a party, whose ill-directed enthusiasm spurns all the regulations of a wholesome discipline, and with such sentiments in their mouths, arrogate to

* Mr. Stephen’s Speech, p. 17.

† Review of Reasons for a Registry, p 31.

themselves the exclusive sympathies of benevolence and religion?

We need scarcely anticipate the answer. If the delicate and intricate subject of emancipation must be discussed in Parliament, it is high time to wrest it from the hands of Mr. Wilberforce and his friends. The Colonies have ever contended that their right in the property of their slaves cannot constitutionally be taken away from them by any Act of the British Legislature; and that the regulation of their own internal policy, by their representatives in Assembly, is their prescriptive right, as British subjects, confirmed by ancient charters. But judging from what has already past, it may be anticipated that the House of Commons will assume the right to deliberate on this subject: it would indeed be inexpedient and unjust to pause at such a crisis, until it shall have applied the remedy to an evil of its own creation. The question cannot be left in its present uncertainty, and we trust, therefore, that its first measure will be to disavow its former resolutions, or at least to give such an explanation of them as shall allay the fearful impression which they have produced on the minds both of the master and the slave; and to renounce its right to emancipate the Negroes without the consent of the proprietors.

Whatever expectations may be entertained

that the freedom of the Blacks must, in the course of time, be the happy result of their progress in civilization, it is equally inconsistent with justice and policy, that the Parliament should by any declaration commit itself to the accomplishment of this purpose. The events of the last few months have shown that it is liable to the most fatal misinterpretation : it is a proverb no less true than homely, that ‘ a little learning ‘ is a dangerous thing :’ the slaves have been repeatedly given to understand that the Parliament is disposed to recognize their claim to freedom. They do not inquire under what circumstances, or at what period, it is intended that this boon should be conferred upon them ; they know not that civilization and moral improvement are necessary to their safe enjoyment of it ; nor indeed are they sensible of their own unfitness for an extension of their civil rights ; and the greater their ignorance, the less competent are they to form a just estimate of their own incapacity.

The planters look forward with the deepest anxiety to the approaching agitation of this subject : they know, from experience, that the machinations of interested* individuals will be

* Interested it may safely be asserted they are ; some by their peculiar purpose of diverting the channels of the colonial trade to their own immediate engagements ;

set in motion against them ; and they cannot but anticipate a renewal of the disastrous scenes which have lately occurred in the West Indies. In the midst, however, of these apprehensions, the great abilities and enlarged views of one individual in the House of Commons, afford a ground of hope that, by prompt and vigorous measures, the Colonies may yet be rescued from their present state of peril. His sentiments will be supported by the good sense of the better and the more powerful part of the community ; and in proportion as the benevolent feelings of the nation have been carried beyond their more dispassionate convictions, the present danger will produce a contrary effect, at least upon all candid and honourable minds.

It is on Mr. Canning's firmness, and the manly avowal of his sentiments, and of the intentions of Government, that the Colonies mainly rely : reckless of the clamours of a party,

some by that overpowering and dangerous principle of action, not concealed but avowed and gloried in, of bending all things to their own religious tenets ; many, and by far the greater part, by the hope of political influence among those classes (principally, though not wholly, consisting of sanctified seceders from the established church) who, under the name of philanthropy and religion, would justify all expedients in furtherance of this ' great cause.'

who would make up by activity and the hollow pretensions of religious enthusiasm what they want in numbers or in influence, he will look to the great example of Mr. Pitt, who, on all occasions of difficulty, found his security in the boldness of his conceptions, and in his courage to execute them. This is not the moment for a temporising course in Colonial regulation : and his own experience will convince him, that it is a hopeless task to conciliate the opinions of both parties in an angry controversy. If, as a member of the British Parliament, he might before have considered it proper to make an experiment, how far the difficulty of the occasion could be met by an expression of sentiments, just in the abstract, and, if reducible to practice, enlightened and benevolent ; he will, no doubt, in a moment of such awful responsibility as the present, have regard to his character as a Minister of the Crown, the sovereignty of which over the Colonies, independent of Parliament, is to be preserved from the avowed spirit of innovation, that would refer all matters of state, whether foreign or domestic, to the arena of the House of Commons.

It may be anticipated that his measures,—not of Colonial policy alone, but on other occasions equally momentous, should they ever arise,—will justify the expectations which his talents have raised. If the Colonies be in fault—if it

can be proved by respectable testimony that the charges, so often repelled and refuted, but which have again been so boldly objected to them, are well founded,—let a constitutional remedy be applied: but if, on the other hand, the clamours with which they have been assailed are unjust, as we hesitate not to assert, let them be defended and supported without the fear of reproach: let the mother country extend to them the protection of a parent, and they will remain (as their long attachment under circumstances of great difficulty and privation have already proved) an effective and powerful support to her national greatness.

The Colonial proprietors and their connexions, who are members of the legislature, have necessarily, from their numbers, their respectability, and extended interests, great political influence and weight,—equal at least to the maintenance of their own rights. It rests with themselves to exercise it with firmness, and in the true spirit of union and cordiality: the sense of Parliament is with them, for we may confidently anticipate that *there* at least just principles are, sooner or later, sure to prevail; and notwithstanding the clamours, which the manufacturers of the late petitions for emancipation have been enabled to excite, by appealing to the passions and prejudices of those, who move at the watchword of a philan-

thropy which can cost them nothing, the justice of the Colonial cause will triumph. They will, on this great occasion, when the existence of the West Indies is in such imminent danger, speak their sentiments boldly : instead of regretting their misfortune in the possession of Colonial estates, which ever has been, and ever will be, as honourable a source of wealth as any other in this country, they will disclaim the hollow candour of their opponents, who would endeavour to separate their case from that of the resident planters, and pay compliments to their benevolent dispositions at the expense of those whom they may be said to represent. If, but for a moment, they reflect, that their possessions have already been reduced to one half their former value, by a course of measures not emanating from, but forced upon, and, as it were, tacitly justified by Government, they will be sensible that the security of what remains to them will greatly depend upon their own FIRMNESS AND UNANIMITY in Parliament.

END OF NO. I.

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