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THE Committee of the "Society for mitigating and gradually abolishing the State of Slavery throughout the British Dominions," have for some time been anxious to fulfil their promise of communicating to the Public a brief view of their progress and prospects, and such suggestions respecting the farther measures to be adopted as the state of their cause may seem to require. The delay which has occurred has, however, been unavoidable. They felt it to be necessary, before they made the promised communication, to ascertain, with as much precision as possible, the intentions of his Majesty's Government with respect to this most momentous subject.

The circulation of the Society's various publications appears to have produced a more extensive effect than could have been anticipated; and although the Session of Parliament was already considerably advanced before the public attention was engaged, no fewer than about two hundred and thirty Petitions were spontaneously addressed to Parliament, from all parts of the country, praying for the mitigation and gradual extinction of Slavery; and it is certain that the multiplication of similar Petitions was only prevented by the parliamentary discussion of the question, which took place on the 15th of May.

On that day, Mr. BUXTON made a Motion to the following effect,—

"That the state of Slavery is repugnant to the principles of the British Constitution and of the Christian Religion; and that it ought to be gradually abolished throughout the British Dominions, with as much expedition as may be consistent with a due regard to the well-being of the parties concerned."

Had this motion been agreed to, it was the intention of Mr. BUXTON, as he stated succinctly in his Speech, to follow it up, by moving for leave to bring in a Bill, or Bills, which should embrace the following specific objects.—viz.

- To remove all the existing obstructions to the manumission of Slaves;—
- To cause the Slaves to cease to be chattels in the eye of the law;—
- To prevent their removal, as Slaves, from colony to colony, and, under certain modifications, their sale or transfer, except with the land to which they might be attached;—
- To abolish markets and compulsory labour on the Sunday; and to make that day a day of rest, as well as of religious worship and instruction; and also to secure to the Slaves equivalent time in each week, in lieu of Sunday, and in addition to any time which independently of Sunday is now afforded them, for cultivating their provision grounds;—
- To protect the Slaves, by law, in the possession and transmission of the property they may thus, or in any other way, acquire;—
- To enable the Slave to purchase his freedom, by the payment at once of a fair price for his redemption, or of a fifth part of that price at a time, in return for an additional day in the week to be employed for his own benefit;—
- To make the testimony of Slaves available in Courts of Justice, both in civil and criminal cases;—
- To relieve all Negroes and Persons of Colour from the burden of legally proving their freedom, when brought into question, and to throw on the claimant of their persons the burden of legally proving his right to them;—
- To provide the means of religious instruction for the Black and Coloured population, and of Christian education for their children;—

- To institute marriage among the Slaves; and to secure that state from violation, and from either forcible or voluntary disruption;—
- To put an end to the driving system;—
- To put an end also to the arbitrary punishment of Slaves, and to place their persons as well as property under the guardianship of the law;—
- To provide that all the children born after a certain day shall be free,—care being taken of their education and maintenance until they shall be capable of acting for themselves;—
- To provide that no Governor, Judge, Attorney-General, or Fiscal, shall be a possessor of Slaves, or shall have a direct and obvious reversionary interest in such property, or shall be the agent of the proprietors of Slaves.

Mr. CANNING, as the organ of his Majesty's Government, expressed his concurrence in the general object of putting an end, at some, though perhaps no very early, period, to Slavery throughout the British Dominions. He abjured the idea of perpetual Slavery. He further expressed his concurrence in several of the specific measures by which it had been proposed to effect the general object. He objected, however, to the abstract form of Mr. BUXTON's motion, and he proposed to substitute in its place the following Resolutions, which, at the close of the discussion, were unanimously adopted by the House—viz.

- "1st. That it is expedient to adopt effectual and decisive measures for meliorating the condition of the Slave population in his Majesty's Colonies.
- "2d. That, through a determined and persevering, but judicious and temperate, enforcement of such measures, this House looks forward to a progressive improvement in the character of the Slave population; such as may prepare them for a participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty's subjects.
- "3d. That this House is anxious for the accomplishment of this purpose at the earliest period that may be compatible with the well-being of the Slaves, the safety of the Colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of all parties concerned therein.
- "4th. That these Resolutions be laid before his Majesty.

As these propositions embraced substantially the general object which was contemplated in the original Motion, there could be no hesitation on the part of its supporters in acceding to their substitution. It was of the very highest importance that his Majesty's Government and Parliament should be concurrently and unanimously pledged to so unequivocal a declaration of the duty of effectually mitigating and eventually extinguishing the state of Colonial bondage; especially as that declaration, while it placed on record this invaluable principle, did not preclude the discussion either of any one of the specific measures of reform above enumerated, or of the means by which, with a view to the attainment of the general object, those measures might best be carried into effect.

The unqualified acquiescence of the West-Indian body in the Resolutions proposed by Mr. CANNING, made it still more desirable to accede to them. Even the advantage to be gained by carrying the original Motion on a division, had this been a matter of choice, was not to be compared with that which could not fail to arise from the unanimous adoption of propositions so unexceptionable in themselves, brought forward as they had been by his Majesty's Ministers, and not opposed by any West-Indian proprietor in Parliament.

There still remained, however, considerable difference of opinion, with respect both to the specific plans of reform which were called for, and to the means by which those plans should be accomplished.

On this last point, Mr. CANNING proposed that the Government should take the matter into their own hands. By this course, he conceived that whatever danger was to be apprehended from public, and perhaps angry, discussion, might be avoided, while the conflicting interests of the various parties concerned might be more easily conciliated. With respect to such of the Colonies as had no local Legislatures, and in which the Crown possessed the sole power of making laws, the action of the Government would, of course, be more free and unfettered. There they might legislate by an Order in Council, which would also serve as a model of legislation for the other Colonies. In the case of the latter, all that it was intended to do, in the first instance, was, to recommend the adoption of the proposed reform to the Colonial Legislatures, whose full and fair co-operation, however, Parliament, he said, had a right to expect; but, if an unlooked-for spirit of resistance should manifest itself, his Majesty's Government would then resort to Parliament for counsel.

In specifying the measures which his Majesty's Government have signified their intention of adopting, the Committee will not confine the specification to what actually fell from Mr. CANNING during the debate on Mr. BUXTON's motion. Subsequent communications have enabled them to modify the statement then made, so as to present, if not a particular and detailed, yet a clear general view of the present purposes of his Majesty's Government. They are as follow:—

- That the existing obstructions to manumissions, arising from stamps or fines, or other fiscal regulations, shall be removed;—
- That the Slaves shall be protected by law in the possession, and also in the transmission by bequest, or otherwise, of any property they may acquire;—
- That means shall be provided of religious instruction for the Slaves, and of Christian education for their children;—
- That the driving system shall be peremptorily and entirely abolished, so that the whip shall no longer be the stimulant of labour;—
- That an end shall also be absolutely put to the degrading corporal punishment of females; and that measures shall be taken to restrain, generally, the power of arbitrary punishment, and to prevent its abuse;—
- That, the means of religious instruction being provided, the Sundays shall be given up to the Slave for rest, recreation, and religious instruction and worship (Sunday markets being abolished); and that equivalent time shall be allowed them, on other days, for the cultivation of their provision grounds;—
- That the marriage of Slaves shall be authorised, and sanctioned by law; and that they shall likewise be protected in the enjoyment of their connubial rights.

In respect to the proposal of causing the Slaves to cease from being mere chattels, and attaching them, under certain modifications, to the soil, it was said, that whatever reform of this kind was introduced must be prospective only, as its retrospective operation might disturb the present tenure of property, and take away, in many cases, the only security on which money had been advanced. The question was therefore reserved for further consideration.

The admission of the testimony of Slaves in Courts of Justice was also thought to be beset with so many

difficulties as to require a more deliberate investigation. At the same time, Government professed themselves friendly to the principle of admitting the testimony of Slaves, subject only to such modifications as the interests of justice might for a time require.

The propriety of relieving Negroes and Persons of Colour from the operation of that unjust principle of Colonial law which subjects them to be dealt with as Slaves, unless they shall be able by legal proof to establish their right to freedom, was admitted; and it was signified that further inquiry should be made as to the means for granting them the requisite relief.

It was also admitted to be desirable that no Governor, Judge, Attorney-General, or Fiscal, nor any of the religious instructors about to be appointed, should hold property in Slaves; and though it might be unfair to give to this principle a retro-active effect, yet that there could be no objection to its being made to operate prospectively.

The only remaining points were, the granting facilities to the adult Slaves to purchase their freedom; and the liberation from bondage of all children born after a certain day. In neither of these propositions have the Government hitherto signified their concurrence. Indeed, to the measure of freeing all children born after a certain day, they appeared to feel a more decided objection than to any other that had been suggested. Both the points were deemed of so much moment as to render further information and more mature consideration necessary, before they came to a final decision upon them.

In reviewing the Resolutions adopted by Parliament, and the declared intentions of his Majesty's Government, the Committee see very abundant cause of congratulation. They feel much gratified both by the admissions which they involve; and by the concurrent determination, which has been expressed by his Majesty's Government and by Parliament, to proceed to the immediate redress of some of the existing evils, and to secure eventually the extinction of the very state of slavery.

Still the Committee deeply regret that the mode of proceeding by Parliamentary enactment, in effecting the Colonial reforms which have been recognised as necessary, should not have been preferred to that of leaving this great work to be carried on through the medium of the Colonial Legislatures. Past experience, to say the least, discourages any sanguine hope of their prompt, cordial, and efficient co-operation; and the Committee, therefore, lay their account in meeting with much delay and disappointment, as the consequence of this arrangement.

But, besides this disadvantage, it must be recollected that there are some points, of great and vital moment, on which no distinct hope of reform has as yet been given. It has not been declared that Slaves shall cease to be chattels; that they shall no longer continue, in this respect, as well as for every other purpose of sale or transfer, on the same degrading level with the beasts of the field. They are still liable to be transported, as the master's interest or caprice may dictate, from one Island to another, and separated for ever from their families and dearest connexions, and from their native home. It has not yet been settled, that their testimony shall be received in Courts of Law, although without this the value of many other provisions in their favour must be greatly diminished. No expectation has yet been given that they shall enjoy facilities for obtaining their freedom by their own exertions. And, above all, their progeny are still doomed to be born to the same wretched inheritance with their parents, notwithstanding the undeniable injustice and cruelty of such a destination. And with respect to the points on which a more favourable decision has been signified, they are yet to be fulfilled, and that in the face, it is to be feared, of many unappreciated difficulties.

Let not, therefore, the friends of our enslaved fellow-subjects assume that their work is accomplished. In fact, it is only begun. We are only entering on the field of our labours. We have made, it is true, a fair and hopeful commencement. The influence of the public feeling which has been so remarkably displayed, has effected much. But the ground we have already gained may be lost; and, still more, our farther progress may be delayed, or even wholly obstructed, if we should remit our efforts. Nothing which has occurred ought to have the effect of relaxing, in the very slightest degree, our vigilance and activity. On the contrary, the success already obtained should only stimulate us to increased exertion; for whatever measures, with a view to the ultimate attainment of our objects, were previously deemed necessary, may be considered as no less imperiously called for at the present moment.

In this persuasion, the Committee would particularly recommend that ASSOCIATIONS should be formed in every part of the United Kingdom, for the purpose of co-operating to diffuse information, to procure the requisite funds, and to call forth the distinct expression of public opinion on the subject.

The Committee feel that their cause owes much to those petitioners who, in the last session, addressed Parliament with such promptitude and effect. They trust that the same earnest pleadings will be renewed at an early period of the next session. They trust that, not only from the same places which have already raised their voice in the sacred cause of justice and humanity, but from every county and every town in the United Kingdom, one energetic and concurrent appeal will be made to both Houses of the Legislature, in behalf of our enslaved fellow-subjects; praying that they may be admitted, at the earliest safe and practicable period, to a participation in those civil rights and privileges, and in those moral and religious blessings, which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty's subjects: and that this nation may not be permitted to incur the farther guilt (now that our eyes are opened to the flagrant iniquity of such a course of conduct) of daily augmenting the miserable victims of an unjust and merciless policy, by subjecting the Children, who may hereafter be born, to the same state of abject and degrading bondage to which we have been the criminal instruments of reducing their progenitors.

To activity, vigilance, and perseverance in this course, there are the strongest motives to animate us which can call forth the exertions of Britons and of Christians. We have the cheering hope of being instrumental in rescuing upwards of Eight Hundred Thousand of our fellow-subjects from a state of Slavery which outrages every feeling of humanity, which violates every principle of the British Constitution, and is repugnant to the whole spirit of the Christian Religion. And, still more, we may indulge the hope of contributing to deliver them from that more fatal bondage,—that yoke of ignorance, vice, and irreligion,—beneath which our institutions have continued so long to retain them. May these considerations operate on every mind with an energy which no delay or disappointment can enfeeble, and which no difficulties or opposition shall be able to resist; and, with the blessing of GOD upon our zealous, united, and unintermitted efforts, we may look forward to the not very distant time when we shall be called to rejoice together in the final accomplishment of our work of mercy.

18 Aldermanbury, 12th August, 1823.

Petitions presented to the House of Commons for the Abolition of Negro Slavery.

Alfreton.	Cambridge, Town.	Hinckley.	Rawden.
Allenby.	Calne.	Hitchin.	Retford.
Amphill.	Cardiff.	Hoden, and adjacent parts	Rochdale.
Andover.	Carlisle.	of Holderness.	Rochester and Chatham.
Appleby.	Carmarthen.	Horsham.	Rossendale.
Ashburne.	Castle Dorrington.	Huddersfield.	Rowinglass, Cumberland.
Ashley.	Cavill and Walls-End.	Hull.	Royston.
Associate Congregations of	Charbury.	Huntingdon.	Saffron Walden.
Alnwick.	Chatteris.	Inverkeithing.	Salisbury.
Anthill.	Chelmsford.	Ipswich.	Salop, County of.
Auchtermuchty.	Cheltenham.	Kendal.	Searborough.
Biggar.	Chester.	Kenninghall.	Shaftesbury.
Brahead.	Chesterfield.	Knarborough.	Sheffield.
Cambusnethan.	Chester-le-Street.	Lanark, N.B.	Sherborne.
Carnwath.	Chipping Norton.	Lancaster.	Shiffnall.
Crail.	Cockermouth.	Leeds.	Shoreditch, Parish of.
Cupar.	Coggeshall and Kelvedon.	Leicester.	Society of Friends.
Dundee.	Coggeshall.	Leominster.	Southwark.
Edinburgh.	Colchester.	Lilliesleaf.	South Shields.
Linlithgow.	Coventry.	Liskeard.	Stafford, County of.
Mid-Calder.	Crickhowel.	Liverpool.	Staindrop.
Muckhart.	Cromer.	Llangattock.	Staines.
Peebles.	Darlington.	Longlow.	Standon.
Selkirk.	Derby.	Loughborough.	Stockton.
Associate Synod of the	Diss.	Lutterworth.	Stoke-upon-Trent.
Secession.	Dover.	Madelay.	Stone.
Attelboro'.	Dudley.	Maer Maxton.	Stonehouse.
Baldock.	Dumfries, N.B.	Maldon.	Stow Market.
Ballitore, Kildare.	Dunmow.	Malton.	Stroud.
Banbury.	Durham.	Manchester and Salford.	Sudbury.
Barnard Castle.	Eaglesfield.	Manningtree.	Sunderland.
Bath.	East Dereham.	Mansfield, Nottingham.	Swansea.
Bawtry.	Eccleshall.	Market Drayton.	Tewksbury.
Beccles.	Evesham.	Maryport.	Thetford.
Bedwellty.	Exeter.	Matlock.	Truro.
Belfont.	Eye.	Mutford and Lothingland.	Tynemouth.
Belper.	Falmouth.	Nantwich.	Uttoxeter.
Bergholt, East.	Farringdon.	Neath.	Uxbridge.
Birmingham.	Framingham.	Needham Market.	Wakefield.
Blyth, Northumberland.	Frome-Selwood.	Nether Wadsdale.	Walthamstow.
Bolton, Great and Little.	Gainsborough.	Newcastle-on-Tyne.	Warrington.
Bootle, Cumberland.	Gateshead.	Newcastle-under-Line.	Wells next the Sea.
Bradford, Yorkshire.	Giggleswick.	Norfolk, County of.	Wellington, Salop.
Brandon.	Gloucester.	Norwich.	Westoe.
Braintree and Bocking.	Gosforth.	North Walsham.	Whitehaven.
Brechin, N.B.	Greysouthern.	Nottingham.	Wickham Market.
Bridgenorth.	Griningham.	Olney, Bucks.	Wigton, Cumberland.
Bridgerule.	Hackney.	Ovingham.	Wirksworth.
Bridgewater.	Hadleigh.	Pakefield and Kirkley.	Witham.
Bridport.	Halesworth.	Penbroke, County of.	Woodbridge.
Brigham.	Halstead.	Penrith.	Worcester.
Bristol.	Hanley and Sheldon.	Plymouth.	Workington.
Brosely.	Harling, East.	Pontefract.	Wymondham.
Broughton, Great and Little.	Harrington.	Poole.	Yarmouth, Great.
Burslem.	Hensingham.	Portsea, Philaethan Society.	Yarrow, Durham.
Bury St. Edmunds.	Hertford, County.	Preston.	Yeovil.
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