

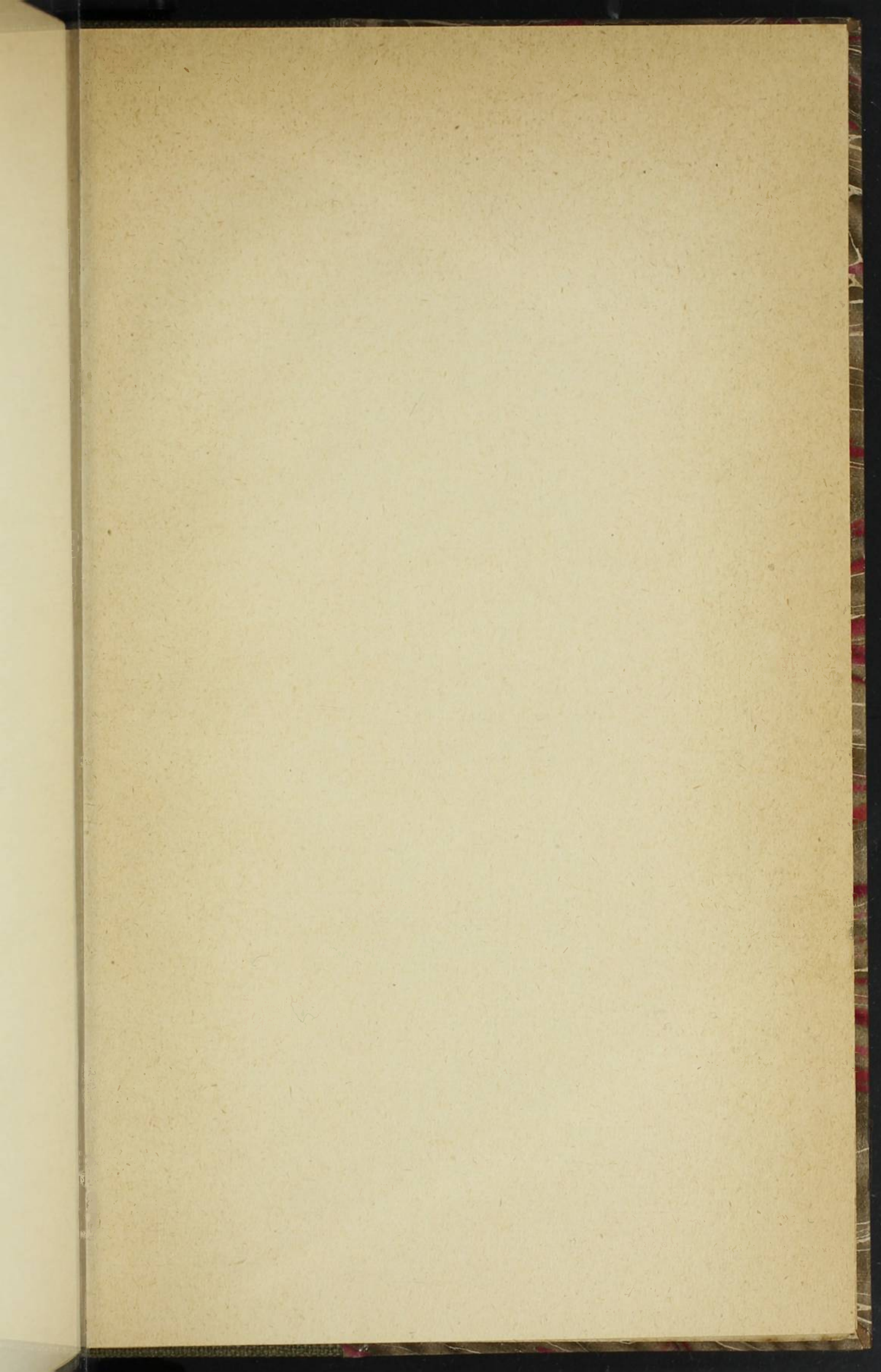
Je ne fay rien
sans
Gayeté

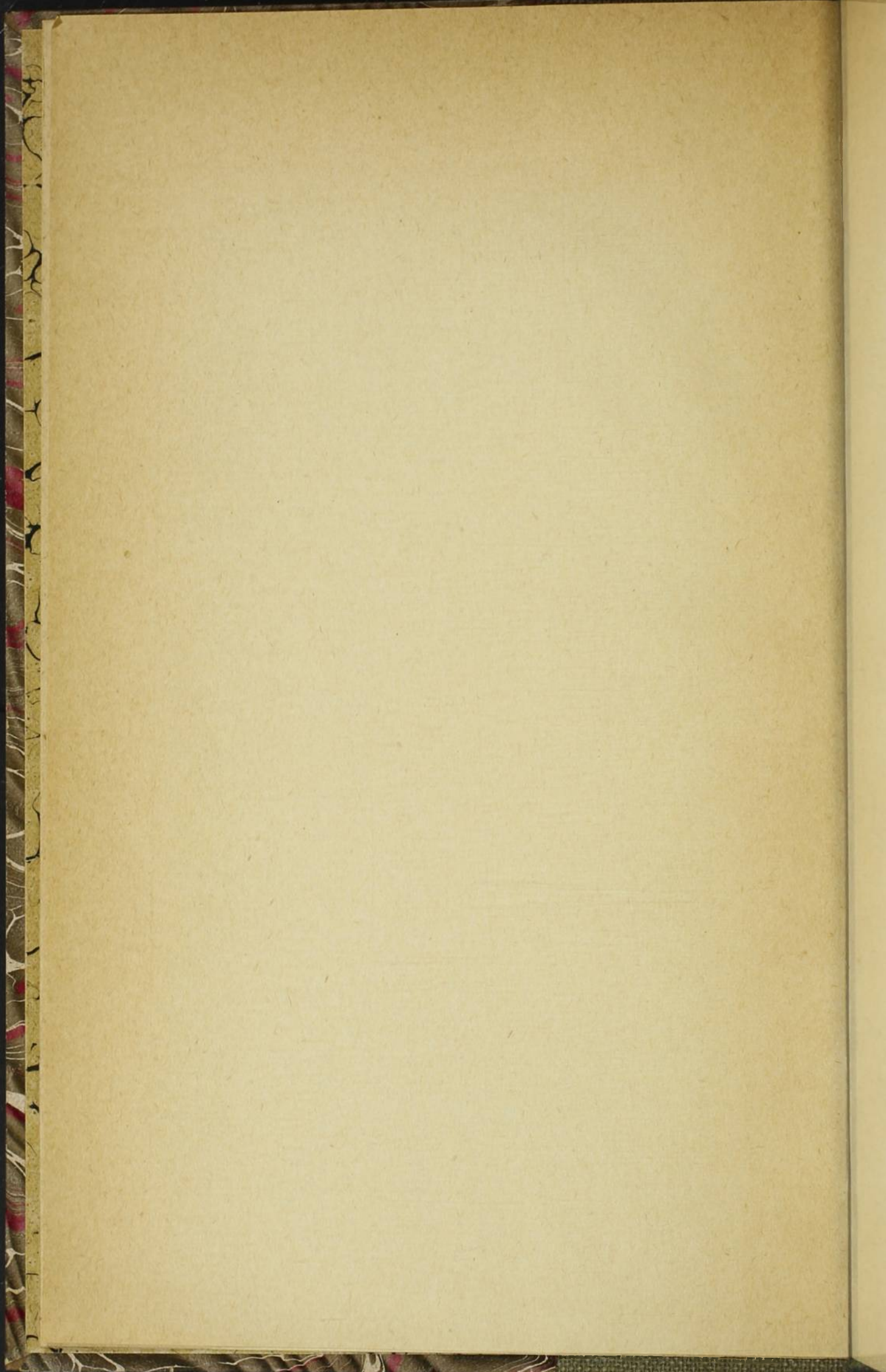
(Montaigne, Des livres)

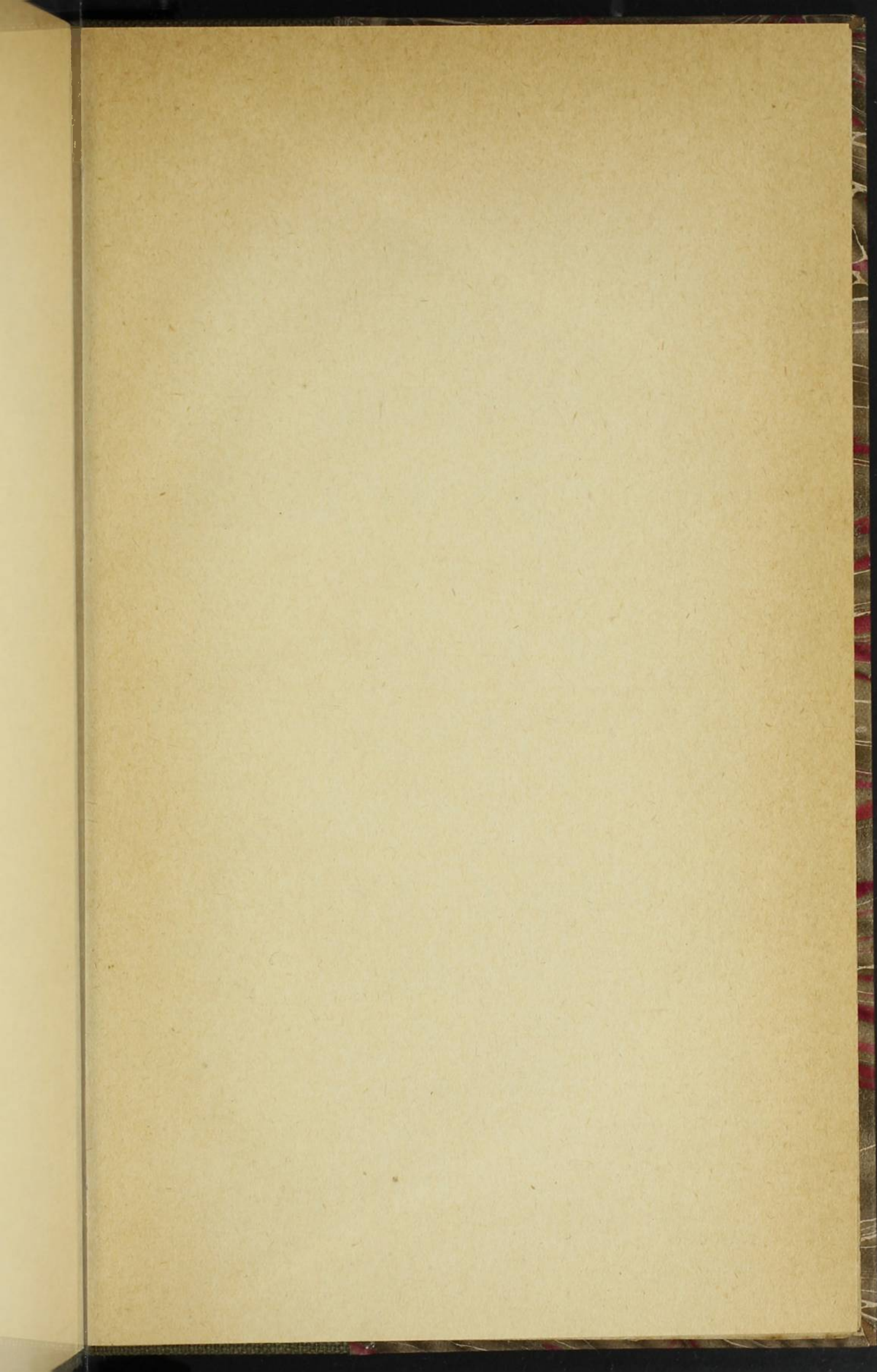
Ex Libris
José Mindlin



G. GAUCHÉ REL. PARIS







CLARENDON'S
ACCURATE AND COPIOUS ACCOUNT
OF THE
DEBATES OF THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS
ON
MR. WILBERFORCE'S MOTION
FOR AN
ABOLITION OF THE
SLAVE TRADE,
APRIL 2, 1792.

LONDON:
Printed for C. COOKE, No. 17, PATERNOSTER-ROW.
(PRICE SIX-PENCE.)

THE STATES OF THE
UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND IRELAND
IN PARLIAMENT ASSEMBLED
DO HEREBY ENACT
That the following
shall be the
Manner in which
the same shall be
carried into
Execution

THE EDITOR of this Pamphlet begs to observe, that, having engaged Four Persons to attend the House of Commons on this Important Occasion, he has been enabled to avail himself of the recollective Faculties and Assistance of each Reporter; by which Means he has it in his Power to present a more *accurate and copious* Report of that interesting Debate, than can possibly be given by any Individual whatever.

✍ Those who wish to peruse the Debates of the House of Commons, on this important Subject, in the Year 1791, are referred to No. 30, 31, and 32 of the Senator, of the last Session of Parliament, wherein the Speech of Mr. Wilberforce, and other celebrated Orators, are given in a more accurate and copious Manner, than in any other Parliamentary Reports.

*** A superb Portrait of William Wilberforce, Esq. is now in the Hands of the Artist, and will be shortly Published in the Senator.

The House of the Parliament
to which the King's Majesty
has been pleased to send the House of Commons
on this important Occasion, in
order to be enabled to avail himself of the
cohesive Powers and Assistance of
every Report; by which Means he
has it in his Power to furnish a more
correct and full Report of that in-
teresting Subject than can otherwise
be given by any individual whatever.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,

Monday, April 2, 1792.

SLAVE TRADE.

Mr. Wilberforce moved, That all the Evidence given on this Trade be referred to the Committee.—Ordered.

He then moved the Order of the Day, which was for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, to consider of the Circumstances of the African Slave Trade.

The House resolved itself into a Committee accordingly, *Sir William Dolben* in the Chair.

Mr. Wilberforce said, that, notwithstanding the ill success he experienced on a former occasion, he was not deterred from renewing his application at present; for, the more he deliberated on the subject of this nefarious traffic, the more warm did he feel, and the more, if possible, was he convinced that it ought to exist no longer. Whatever difference of opinion had before subsisted, and however obstinacy may be prompted to persist in what prejudice might have prompted, however, in fine, Gentlemen may be interested in preserving a traffic which they supposed to be advantageous, yet he trusted that time and reflection had convinced them that the trade was as injurious to their interests, as it was disgraceful to their feelings; and on this ground he should expect to meet with their support to the Motion which he had to submit. He professed himself desirous of now holding no other language than that of conciliation. He was fully aware that several Gentlemen acted from pure principles, and honourable motives. Judging by the humanity and indulgence with which their own slaves were treated, they could not perhaps conceive how the feelings of others could be so obtuse and hardened. But, alas! it was not to such men that the unhappy slaves had to ascribe their miseries; nor should a few instances of mildness seem to atone for the general severity. He wished not to be misunderstood, so as that it should be supposed, when he reprobated a system, he also reprobated persons; he hoped they would be kept distinct. It was not a *Trajan*, or an *Antoninus*, that would make him in love with despotism; for though they may not misuse their power, there were a great many others that would. Aristocracy was often accounted the worst species of despotism, as, instead of one, it produced a number of tyrants: but how incomparably worse was that abominable situation, when people may get to market for despotism, and a fellow with 40l. in his pocket may commence the occupation of a tyrant. The subject had been so discussed, that there were parts of it into which it would not be necessary that

**

R r r

he

he should travel this evening; and therefore he should spare the House the fatigue of listening, and himself the labour of entering into much detail on the present subject.

It was to be regretted, that, in the discussion of this subject, the different parties had discovered too much warmth. He wished it had not been so, although, indeed, the subject was of a nature that would excuse warmth whenever it appeared; and if he should be led, by that failing, to forget any thing material to his cause, it was matter of great consolation to him, that he had friends, whose abilities and inclination would give all necessary assistance, and supply all his defects. He could not help thinking that the Gentlemen who were most deeply interested in the welfare of the West Indies, and all those who had formerly opposed him, would agree to the measure he should propose. He wished to call upon them to come to the discussion freely; to enquire what were the causes of the distinction they made between the abolition of the trade, and the welfare of the West India Islands; what evils there were, and which of them were curable, and which incurable. He believed there were persons in the West Indies who would wish to continue the traffic in Negroes, and yet had felt so warmly what had been said against it, that they would by no means attempt to justify the system, some of the evils of which he should slightly touch upon. Indeed, it was a system that shewed too plainly the evils which attended a Government by absolute monarchy. It was true, that the form of the government of the unhappy Africans was absolute monarchy in general; yet, in regard to the slave trade, they were under the controul of many tyrants; for we saw, by the evidence given of them, that whole coasts were turned into a market for slavery. There was something in that very thought, that made every noble mind to look with horror on the traffic.

It was pretty generally, and he believed rather industriously, rumoured abroad, that it was his design, and that of his friends, to propose, besides an abolition of the trade, the immediate emancipation of the Negroes. This, however, was an intention he could never have entertained for a moment. He was exceedingly sensible that they were in a state far from being prepared for the reception of such an enjoyment. Liberty he considered as the child of reason—a seed which, when sown in any soil, would shoot into a plant, and seldom, indeed, failed to vegetate into maturity. That qualified freedom, however, which they were capable of enjoying, ought not to be withheld from them; and when disposed to be industrious, and induced by kindness to consider the place they cultivated as their own, they should expect in the end to enjoy the reward of their good services. It was in vain to represent, that at present they were well treated and rewarded, that they had kind masters and indulgent usage. It was not always, perhaps it was
but

but seldom, that the most considerable planters dwelt on their own plantations. They often lived at a distance, and sometimes in another country, while the management of their slaves was committed to their stewards and overseers. In noble minds, there was inherent a generous and humane principle, which sympathised with sorrow, and lent a chearing familiarity to those who laboured for them. But greatly different were the effects, when power was intrusted to the low, the vulgar, the ignorant, and the base. Of this description were the overseers of plantations, whose only aim was to have as great a crop as possible, regardless by what cruelty towards the slaves they effected this grand object. By whipping, starving, and overworking these poor wretches, they in general succeeded; though that success might be of real injury to the employer; for the greatest part of his slaves being destroyed by such bad treatment, his profits are more than expended in buying others to replace them; and he frequently retired from so disadvantageous a business. But of this the overseers are entirely regardless, and went to another plantation, having his shoulders loaded with the reputation of the amazing crops he produced for his last employer.

To talk of personal protection and security to the persons of these people, was idle in the extreme; for as a Negro, by the laws of the country, was not qualified to give his evidence, he might suffer the bitterest cruelties, and no white man be present, of whose testimony he could avail himself. But supposing he had a competent witness to produce, what chance had he of redress, what hopes of convicting his master before a tribunal of whites? Most societies of men possess, in some degree, the *Esprit du Corps*; but these people, of all others, were linked together in bonds of mutual interest, tyranny, and injustice.

The next matter to be here considered, was the law and usage of Africa arising out of the trade in question; and he confessed he could not look at it without shame and disgrace. These were evils so great, that, whatever were the characters of some persons concerned in the trade, he should expect to find that no consideration, or the value of the system, should keep it up, unless it could be proved that the evils were incurable; and here let the Committee recollect, that the evidence of those evils being incurable, came chiefly from gentlemen of great property in the islands, but who did not reside there, so that their testimony was far from being conclusive. It was such, indeed, as ought not to come into the question, when there was evidence of a different nature to be had. It was not he who made the abolition of the trade necessary, by any thing that he had urged on it, but it was the accessories of the Gentlemen in the West India Islands in defence of the trade, and particularly those of Jamaica: all they had said upon the subject, in defence of the trade, proved the necessity of the abo-

lition. When they were asked questions upon this question, they gave first one answer, and then another, going from one corner to another, and shifting to conceal the real infamy of the traffic, until closely pressed, and unable to defend themselves any longer, they retired from it altogether in argument, and, like the rat, when the house was in flames, changed their station altogether, and hid themselves in the corner of another building. So, in this case, those Gentlemen had been beat out of all chance of defending the trade itself, or the abuses of it. They took upon themselves to say, that it would be the ruin of commerce to abolish it, and that the evils which attended it are absolutely incurable. And here it would be necessary to see the condition of these unhappy people in the West Indies, which was certainly extremely bad. This he proved on a former occasion, by the positive testimony not only of unsuspected persons on his part, but out of the mouths of the witnesses who professed a friendship for, and wished the continuance of, the trade in question; and therefore, in that respect, it would be unnecessary for him to go into any minuteness of detail. Many of the witnesses were so circumstantial, that, in describing the effect of this traffic, they went, as it were, to the very minimum of human misery. The slave's situation, as to the punishment to which he was exposed, and to the total absence of all legal protection, was indeed most wretched. They were totally under the controul of the whites: their evidence was not taken in any court; and therefore, to say they had any real legal protection, was ridiculous and absurd. If they had claims, they could not enforce them: if they were oppressed, they could only appeal for redress to their oppressors. Nor was the manner in which they were worked less severe, than their want of protection was distressing: they were driven in the field, whipped like cattle, and often branded and treated with the greatest cruelty. Indeed, when he reflected on all that was proved in this case, and the imputation that lay on the gentlemen of the West Indies, he confessed he could not entertain a doubt, but that those very gentlemen would join the House in a desire to put an end to these shameful practices, in order that their characters might be retrieved; and that they would see that the abolition of the trade was a measure which they would candidly admit to be proper, and which they would, from a love of justice, adopt. He trusted that they felt as he did; and he was decidedly of opinion, that there was no measure whatever, short of the total abolition of this trade, that would answer the purpose of justice, and do away the infamy, or abate the cruelty, of making a traffic of human blood. He had heard much of colonial regulations, and that it was possible, under them, to reduce the trade to some tolerable system. Upon the most mature deliberation on that subject, he was convinced that no colonial regulation, of

any kind whatever, would answer the purpose. But here he begged leave to observe, by way of answer to what might be objected to him, that if he took the evidence of the persons who were the friends of the trade, he was bound by the testimony they gave, and that such testimony was against his idea of an abolition. To this it was necessary to observe, that those persons spoke through the thickest clouds of prejudice: but taking their evidence to be quite accurate, and quite true, it did not amount to any thing like a defence of the continuance of the slave trade. Suppose, for instance, that these unhappy Negroes had all the legal protection of those who enjoy the purest freedom, were they in a condition to make a right use of that advantage? Were they, in short, in a condition to enjoy those advantages which the advocates for the continuance of the slave trade pretend to say they are ready to allow them? Indeed, he was ready to confess that he thought they were not in that condition, and that the granting of these advantages to the unhappy slaves in the West Indies, would only lead them on to require others, and might produce much discord and misery in the plantations, and perhaps finally the destruction of them. This led him to think upon the fate of St. Domingo, which had lately been the subject of much observation; the case gave us a lesson, and we ought to reflect on it.

In the discussion of colonial possession, the French thought that a distinction ought to be made between Creoles and Negroes, because they thought the latter could not see and feel liberty as well as the former; and it came to be known by the Slaves in St. Domingo, that their condition was to be altered and amended, but that there was to be a distinction between them and the Creoles. Now, if it be true that this was the cause of the insurrection, as the advocates for the continuance of the slave trade would insinuate, how can these advocates recommend what, upon their argument, tends to destroy the happiness of both the whites and blacks, without affording a chance for the happiness of either? These were the dilemmas to which the friends of this traffic reduced themselves, by attempting to defend a system that was in itself indefensible; and this again proved the fatality of attempting to amend this traffic by any jobbing whatever. But yet he was told, that, surely wise laws, for the regulation of these unhappy beings, would contribute much to their happiness. To this he answered, that, before men can benefit by the wisdom of laws, it was necessary they should have some idea of freedom. Freedom itself was a blessing the most valuable in nature; but it could be enjoyed only by a nation where the faculty of thought had been for some time employed. True liberty was a plant of celestial growth, and none could perceive its beauties, or taste of its odour, but those who had employed the nobler faculties of the human soul, in con-
templating

templating the goodness of the divine essence from whence it sprung. He hoped the day would arrive when all mankind would enjoy its blessings; but this neither was, nor could it be, the case at present with the unhappy Negroes in the West Indies; and from these reflections he was led to believe, that no man could, in substance, be their friend, who proposed any thing that could lead them to hope for their emancipation. The way to alleviate their misery, was to make them attached to their masters, governors, and leaders: this was congenial to the mode they were accustomed to from their childhood; for, in Africa, they led a life as if they were the objects of the care of a patriarch. Doctrine contrary to this, seemed to him to be not only improper with regard to the Negroes, but also quite unsafe with regard to the West Indies. If any thing should remind them of their rights, and the system of proposed regulation certainly must, he entreated Gentlemen to reflect on the number of these unhappy persons, and the vast majority they made of all the inhabitants of the Islands; and if there should be any contest, what the consequence would be. What was the result of all this? a very plain one—that if these were dangers at all, they were multiplied tenfold by the importation of Negroes; for those just arrived, being less inured to, must be more displeas'd with, the system carried on in the West Indies. Indeed, as an author of great reputation had observed, these successive importations were sufficient to account for all the plots and assassinations that we had heard of in the West Indies. By this mode of introducing new slaves, supposing that a plan of reformation were agreed upon, the whole of it would be entirely out of the question, because every year there would be introduced a set of persons who must of necessity be strangers to it.

Another topic had been observed upon frequently, the insurrections in St. Domingo. Many misstatements were made of that circumstance; and he had felt it his duty to enquire into it, because he thought it necessary for him to enquire into every thing that tended in any degree to elucidate this subject; and here he must observe, that the matter was not a dispute between the black and the white men, or of the debates in France or here. It was a dispute between the people of colour and the white people, wherein the blacks took the opportunity of rising, and some men of colour joined, for the sake of profit for themselves; and all the decrees that afterwards passed in the National Assembly, that kept alive these distinctions, had been the cause in part of all the calamities that ensued. All these things proved that we should not encourage importation, under the idea that it may be regulated.

Mr. Wilberforce then took notice of the vast increase in the importation of slaves to the West Indies of late years, particularly Jamaica; and he believed that, if it was followed up for some
time,

time, the Planters will have reason to lament they had ever any thing to do with that importation. But it was said, that it was impossible to go on with the trade without importation from the coast of Africa, for the slaves there get fewer and fewer, and weaker and weaker. Having thus described the condition he understood them to bear in the West India Plantations, he next proceeded to represent the manner of obtaining them in Africa, in which was involved the question, whether they were made happier by transplanting them to the West Indies. This subject had been so fully discussed last year, that he had no occasion to occupy much of the time of the House upon it at present: he could not hear, however, without indignation, the manner in which humanity was made to be implicated in conveying those men from what he called the cruelty of their native despots. He admitted that a greater part of the continent, particularly that near the coast, was divided amongst a set of despotic little chieftians, who were perpetually at war with each other; but he contended, at the same time, that this infamous trade was the occasion of those wars, that they were frequently carried on by the direct assistance, and generally promoted by the European traders. The chiefs did not confine themselves to making war upon each other; but it also often happened, that when one of the chiefs was in want of any European commodities, which he had not slaves enough to purchase, he would send some of his foldiers by night to set fire to a village, that he might be enabled to make captives of the flying and affrighted inhabitants. It was owing to this accursed trade that the natives of Africa were made miserable at home as well as abroad; that no man thought himself secure in his bed, or in the fields; that suspicion would not suffer him to have a friend; and that in every stranger he met with an enemy. He alledged that the Europeans supplied them with powder and ammunition for their wars, and assisted them in what the language of the traffic called *making trade*. It would be endless to recount all the instances he gave of violences committed by our vessels, sometimes kidnapping strangers whom they met, and at others disguising themselves as Negroes, and making an incursion in the night to plunder and destroy villages which they were trading with in the day. He observed that the number of slaves now in the island of Jamaica only was 300,000, while that of the whites was only 20,000, and this alarming disparity they still wished preposterously to increase. He quoted the authority of Mr. Long, the historian of Jamaica, in proof of this opinion; and also an extract from a pamphlet written by a Carolina Planter. They both agreed, that the number of Africans in the islands was already too great, and could not be augmented without incurring the most imminent hazard; that the slaves were already amply sufficient for every purpose of cultivation; and that, when well
treated,

treated, they were always found to multiply very rapidly. Of this he gave a variety of instances, particularly in late years, when their condition and way of living was somewhat mended. That they had not been more prolific, was easily accounted for, by the shameful manner in which their morals were not only neglected, but corrupted, all decency being disregarded in every species of intercourse; as, indeed, in every point of view, they were regarded and used as animals of a distinct species from man. This, he said, accounted for the disobedience of their masters' orders. Nor was it less to be attributed to the sordid and mean dispositions of their rulers, who treated them as brutes incapable of feeling. Such depravity must beget depravity in the minds of the slaves, and was proved by the testimony of even his adversaries' own witnesses. These poor creatures were without legal protection, subject to the cruelty of the overseers, over whom there was no controul; and those inhuman instruments of oppression whipped them like cattle, not supposing them moral agents, capable of reflection or resistance! Even the women were not exempt from their cruelties: the laws of decency were violated; and this alone should induce the West India Gentlemen to comply with the wishes of the friends to the abolition. There was another circumstance, to which he must call the attention of the Committee. If the testimony of a slave was not taken, there could be little use in passing any law for their relief. If a white man commits an act of cruelty toward a slave, punishment never follows. And what is the excuse given for this act of impunity?--Why, that it would be dangerous to inspire the blacks with sentiments of resistance! He thought it would be cruel to give them the shadow of the laws for their protection, without the reality. It would be to give them that which would ultimately prove their ruin; for if their testimony was not allowed in seeking for redress, they must always meet with punishment. It would be wrong and injudicious to awake in them a consciousness of freedom, without a particle of liberty; it would only create dissatisfaction, and make them unhappy.

But, that there should not be any appearance of unfairness in what he had to say, he would endeavour to state every thing he could against himself upon this subject. It had been said, that the trade yielded to this country much balance, and that the abolition of it was said to endanger that service, by diminishing the number of persons to be employed in it: this was ably taken up, and well handled, by a gentleman of great abilities, Mr. Clarkson. Instead of its being a nursery for seamen, Mr. Clarkson had proved, to a demonstration, that the opposite was the fact. Five-sixths of the sailors he computed to have died in the service, who sailed for Africa; and the mortality was even more than what was stated by his opponents. Out of 12,263, the loss, on an average,

average, in a voyage to Africa, was not less than 2640. Half the crews of the ships employed in that trade deserted, and were lost to the navy. If these proportions were disputed, he was ready to go into an enquiry upon the subject. He knew they would not; and he trusted he had stated enough upon it, without entering into any particulars, or calling here on the House to enter into the consideration of the humanity of the question; the point of interest to the planters was enough.

It had been said, that the abolition of the trade would injure the manufactures of this country; an assertion of which there was not the least colour of proof, nor the least foundation in truth. Indeed, there never was an excuse for the trade. All that had been attempted to be made, had been rejected by all men of sense and reflection. It was not friendly to the trade itself; for the persons employed in the slave trade, were never the means of employing any of the manufacturers of this country so as to promote our political welfare. Indeed, they were those who had all their life-time been employed in the war, of whom the celebrated Adam Smith said, that when one hundred thousand were discharged in time of peace, he did not find that industry was increased, or that trade flourished in proportion of this change from military to civil life. The fact was, that people of this description were fit for nothing but the odious business in which they were brought up. He had heard that Liverpool and Bristol existed, as it were, in its merchandise, upon the slave trade: this was a great error; for he had reason to believe that but a small part of the trade of these two towns was composed of this. The truth was, that a few individuals profited much by the traffic; but to state it as a great source of national wealth was ridiculous.

The next point was the interest of the islands in the West Indies. Where the question was general policy, and so it must be where all the West India Islands were concerned, the considerations of humanity and justice ought to be alive in the recollection; and here he confessed that all he had been saying on the West India Islands, and on the principle of policy, were inferior considerations with him. "Africa! Africa!" exclaimed Mr. Wilberforce, "your sufferings have been the theme that has arrested and engages my heart—your sufferings no tongue can express; no language impart!" He said, it was the restoration of these poor distressed people to their rights that he had nearest at heart. There he laid hold of his point; a point which he would never quit, or give up, or abandon, until he had obtained his object; and to be entitled to it, he had made out a case so clear, so plain, so forcible, so just, so irrefragable, that he was confident there was not one person, even among those who wished well to the trade, who would deny the

truth of his assertion; and most particularly, they would not deny what he had said on a former occasion on this subject.

He had said, and it was true, that this traffic was totally defenceless. Such arguments were brought on that occasion to oppose him, as perfectly proved their futility, and proved too, that they were the effect of prejudice. It had been stated, that the persons taken by us were prisoners of war: this he admitted; he had not forgot that war still continued to distress and disgrace mankind. He had not forgot neither, that the persons who were thus the objects of it were his fellow-creatures.—Was it not unnatural for us? Was it not in vain that we attempted to prove to the world, that we encouraged this trade to prevent the Negroes from falling into the hands of a cruel tyrant, who would put them to death, if we did not buy them? He did not imagine that we should find people shallow enough to believe this pretext. No! the truth was, that our continuing the trade was one great cause of the war; and those who promoted it, were accountable for the mischief which it produced. But war was not the one hundredth, nor the one thousandth, part of the calamity which was occasioned by this trade. The Committee would find, on looking at the evidence, that whole families were taken from their places of abode by fraud, by cunning, by violence. This was proved by a man, who said he was engaged in this very mode of obtaining slaves. He told them that families were divided; and that one part of a family was taken at one time, and another part of it at another. It had been matter of consolation to the husband to see his wife in bondage, because it fell to his lot to bear it with her! When this was asserted, it was peremptorily denied by the advocates for the slave trade, and at last it turned out to be true; and when they were proved, the most distressing thing to a man of sensibility was, that the witnesses related all these things with indifference, as mere matters of course; a proof that the trade itself deprived its followers of all the feelings of humanity. This was not all; the sanction of law was to be given to this traffic. The name of justice was to be profaned. Men were to be accused of crimes for the purpose of convicting them, in order to furnish an excuse for their being sold as slaves. All the apparatus and machinery of injustice were to be put in motion to deprive men of their liberty; and it was a fact well known, that crimes were imputed to those who had never committed them; so far from it, that they were the best of citizens. Nay, it was now carried on to such a pitch of flagrant injustice, that almost every trivial offence was made an offence for which a man was declared liable to be sold to slavery! Another excellent effect of the propriety of continuing the slave trade! For the authenticity of these facts, he referred to the work of Mr. Moore, an ingenious

nious gentleman, who had written on this subject. But there were other facts remaining full as bad, and as strong as those which he had mentioned. Europeans came on the coast of Africa, and hovered like vultures, and like vultures lived on blood: they entrained at times; and at times, by force, took away the natives, and sold them for slaves. This was mentioned on a former occasion. It was denied, indeed, but afterwards put beyond the power of doubt. In short, whatever might have been the system of the slave trade originally, the whole was now become a system of plunder and rapacity, many instances of which he quoted. One, in particular, to which he adverted, was the conduct of a captain, employed lately slaving off the River Camarone. He had sent some of his people, with a black in his confidence, to water on shore. The black was seized by one of the natives for debt, and taken off. To revenge this, the captain insisted that his crew should strip naked, and blacken their hides, and wear a flock girdle, and repair on shore. Constrained to this measure, with some hesitation they agreed. They visited the house of the person who had taken off the black, fired on the family, killed his wife and children; and two poor creatures, whom they had wounded, were taken, one of whom died on shore, and the other expired when he reached the vessel! The blacks, accustomed to perpetual attacks, are always alert in revenging insults. They armed, and, in the retreat of the crew, wounded several of the British sailors; and the rest escaped with difficulty. Strange as it might appear, this did not interrupt the trade and commerce. Still Africans, like other men, have feelings; the flame, though smothered, was not subdued. The chieftain, in a week, came on board, and requesting powder and ball from the captain, to make war on his neighbours, to procure slaves, was actually provided. Callous and dead to every sentiment of danger, thus were the instruments of revenge placed in the hands of the indignant chief; and the captain apologized to his master, by assigning the *motive* for giving their ammunition to the African; at the same time observing, that he "did not waste their property!" Thus prepared, the chieftain seized the crew and the captain, and carried them on shore. When it was justly expected that death would have been the consequence of their capture, the lesson of depravity had its influence on the natives—*avarice* triumphed over their *feelings*—"perfidy was repaid by perfidy; and the captain and crew were enlarged, on condition that he would surrender the property which he had on board." Oh, shame! shame! these *slave* dealers excelled *us* in *honour*, and *we* were their superiors only in *disgrace*!

If any thing could shew enough of the cruelties of our African dealers in the slave trade, these circumstances would do so. All

this proved, that, after men were engaged in this trade for a little while, they lost all feeling and sensibility. Nothing was thought of these things by men who had been a long while in the trade; but it required to be a little used to it, before men could so completely lose their feelings and humanity. But these cruelties and enormities were increasing; for, no longer ago than last August, when that House was debating on the subject of this very trade, six British vessels had anchored off Calabar, a town which seemed devoted to eternal misfortune. It appeared, from the report, that the natives had raised the price of slaves. The captains consulting together, agreed to fire on the town, to compel them to lower the price of their countrymen. To heighten, if possible, the shame of this proceeding, he said, that they were prevented, for some time, from effecting their purpose, by the presence of a French captain, who refused to join in their measures, and purchased at a high price. He felt, with the most painful sensibility, the shame of thus exposing the disgrace of his country; but it was the more incumbent on him, as these very men were re-appointed to situations in the same trade, as if they had performed the most meritorious and honourable exploit. However, in the morning they commenced a fire, which lasted for three hours; and the guns being directed by old British seamen, had their intended effect. During the consternation, the wretched inhabitants were seen making their escape in every direction. In the evening the attack was renewed, which continued until they agreed to sell their slaves at the price stipulated by the captains. He represented, that, in this attack, upwards of twenty persons had been destroyed. He did not fail to describe this cruel outrage as a mockery of all feeling, and an insult on the opinions of Parliament, and the sense of the people. [The House, in a sudden burst of indignation, vociferated, Name! Name!] Mr. Wilberforce resisted for a long time; at last the clamor overpowered him, and we heard the following names of ships and captains. The ship Thomas, of Bristol, Captain Philips; the Betsey, of Liverpool, Captain Doyle; the Recovery, of Bristol; the Wasp, Captain House; the Thomas, of Liverpool. Here the confusion and horror was so great, that we were unable to hear the name of the other vessel. Such scenes of bloodshed and inhumanity he knew shocked the Committee.—It shocked him so much as almost to deprive him of the power of utterance. There was no consideration on this globe that would make him share such enormities. What hereafter might await such heinous deeds he knew not—he would not have the guilt of having neglected to expose it for all the wealth in the world. The blood of it be on the guilty heads!

The next point was the usage the poor slaves met with in the Middle Passage, from the coast of Africa to the West Indies; on the cruelties of which he not expatiate; but as it had been called a nursery for our seamen, he should observe on a few figures in the

best computation we had on the subject. In the year 1788, in a ship in this trade, 650 persons were on board—out of whom 155 died. In another, 405 were on board—out of whom were lost 200. In another there were on board 450—out of whom 200 died. In another there were on board 402—out of whom 73 died. When Captain Wilson was asked the causes of this mortality, he replied, that the slaves had a fixed melancholy and dejection; that they wished to die; that they refused to eat, till they were beaten for not eating; and that, when they had been so beaten, they had looked in the faces of the whites, and said, piteously, “Soon we shall be no more.” They sometimes threw themselves overboard; but were, in general, prevented by the high netting placed on purpose to restrain them; and such a death they called an *escape*. This melancholy, and its attendant disorders, mocked all attempts to relieve them, and could only be conquered by conquering the kindnesses of human nature. The wretches on board these ships died sometimes of insanity, sometimes of starving, and were sometimes drowned! And is this horrid traffic to be continued as a nursery for seamen? Even when the best regulations have been made, we have lost of our sailors above eleven per cent. When those regulations were in agitation, the merchants in the trade protested that it would not be worth following; and now that those regulations took place, they loudly called out that the motion for the abolition, if carried, would be the means of their losing large profits! What! lose large sums of money by the abolition of a losing trade?—Such were the absurdities to which the advocates of this trade and human blood were driven. In every point of view it must appear that the interest, as well as the honor, of the country, required a discontinuance of so vile a commerce. We might reap much greater benefits by a commerce of another kind with Africa; and the Sierra Leona Company were laudably establishing a trade, by which they would gain immense advantages, without disgracing themselves by trafficking in human blood, and in murder. It was a mockery of language to say, that relieving the Negroes from their native oppression was an act of mercy; for how could mercy exist where it had not justice for its basis? Justice was the primary principle on which human happiness and morals were founded; it was that to which angels, as well as men, owed their virtues and their joys. But this unjust, this murderous mercy, which we shewed to the Africans, was the same that the ferocious disciples of Mahomet displayed in the massacre of whole Christian nations in propagating the Koran—It was the same with the slaughtering humanity of the Spaniards in America, to recommend the Inquisition. He could have wished to drop for ever all recital of facts which tended to prove the cruelty of those who dealt in this odious and abominable traffic, but there was an instance which he could not omit in this case.

Notwithstanding

Notwithstanding the regulation of Sir William Dolben's Bill, the situation of those wretches in the Middle Passage was little better than before, and the mortality was equally great. He then enumerated several instances of cruelty, of which we shall select one. This was the case of a young girl, fifteen years of age, of extreme modesty; and finding herself in a situation incident to her sex, was extremely anxious to conceal it. The captain of the vessel, instead of encouraging so laudable a disposition, tied her by the wrist, and placed her in a position so as to afford a spectacle to the whole crew. In this situation he beat her; but not thinking the exhibition he had made sufficiently conspicuous, he tied her up by the legs, and then also beat her. But his cruel ingenuity was not yet exhausted, for he next tied her up by one leg, after which she lost all sensation, and in the course of three days she expired. This was beyond dispute a fact. [Name! Name! Name! resounded from all parts of the House.] Captain Kimber was the man! said Mr. Wilberforce. If any thing could, in the annals of human depravity, go beyond this, he owned he did not know where to look for it. But this was not a singular instance, there were others of the same kind; there were proofs, beyond all dispute, of many others; and if the Honourable Gentlemen wished to take notes of the horrid acts of this bloody traffic, he would employ their pens days together, in barely taking down simple facts. But this was not all; it was well known that it was now become customary to set fire to whole villages in Africa, for the purpose of throwing the inhabitants into confusion, and taking them as they fled from the flames. Of all the trades that disgraced human beings, this was the very worst. In others, however infamous, there were some proofs of the trait of something like humanity, but in this there was a total absence of them all. It was a scene of uniform, unadulterated, unsophisticated wickedness. He took a general view of all the other points on which this trade had been defended, and refuted them all.

It had been alledged, that our abandoning the trade would have little effect, if we could not induce other nations to do the same. But this was an observation which they with greater force could turn upon ourselves. They might ask, of what avail would it be to turn aside the petty streams of traffic, while the broad river of British commerce flowed without interruption. But was there not then remaining in our nation that pride which could resist the sordid impulse of avarice opposing itself to justice? *Denmark*, whose commerce could less than ours afford any degree of diminution, had already rejected the foul intercourse. It was a noble achievement, and should make BRITONS blush to have slipped the opportunity of leading the glorious example. He could not but express the unanimous sentiment which pervaded every part of the nation

nation on this subject. Men, who differed on many speculative points, and most political topics, seemed to think of these disputes when the paramount principles of humanity and justice were in question. Whatever tempests may agitate the lower atmosphere, all was harmony and brightness in the higher regions.

“ As some tall cliff, that lifts its awful form,
 “ Swells from the vale, and mid-way leaves the storm,
 “ Though round its breast the rolling clouds are spread,
 “ Eternal sun-shine settles on his head.”

He had already stated, that the slaves now in our islands were sufficiently numerous for every purpose; that, when no more were suffered to be imported, they must of necessity be well treated; that, by proper treatment, they would multiply faster, and be better servants; and if the planters had more ground than was cultivated, they might employ it to greater advantage in cotton and cinnamon than in canes. Improvements of machinery also would diminish labour very much: and however useful those colonies were to us, yet, considering by how precarious a tenure we held them in time of war, we could not suffer any material capital to be invested with them: but, whatever may be their value, we should not consider their wishes in opposition to their real interests, and contrary to the principles of honour, justice and humanity. We had been lately informed, by him who most, and most deservedly, possessed the public confidence, that our commerce and revenues were in the most prosperous state imaginable; and while we possessed so many blessings, and so much happiness ourselves, sure we could the better afford, and could less grudge, to impart a portion of them to others. Prejudice had once been entertained against the Negroes, which no Gentleman at present could, without a blush, acknowledge; because their complexion differed from ours, so also did their nature. This foolish idea being removed, were we to quarrel with them for being savages? He hoped not; for there certainly was not a crime imputed to the *Africans*, which had not actually been committed by our ancestors here in *Britain*. His Motion would somewhat differ from that which he proposed last year; though he should never be of any other opinion, than that the trade should be totally abolished immediately.

Mr. Wilberforce concluded a speech of great length, in which he seemed to endeavour at the expression of obvious truth, in plain rather than elegant language, by saying, that, in his exertions for the present cause, he had found *happiness*, though not hitherto *success*; that it enlivened his *waking*, and soothed his *evening* hours; that he carried the topic with him to his repose, and often had the
 blifs

blifs of remembering, that he had *demand*ed justice for millions, who could not *ask* it for themselves!—He then moved,

“That it is the Opinion of this Committee, that the Trade carried on by British Subjects, for the Purpose of obtaining Slaves on the Coast of Africa, ought to be abolished.”

This, if carried, he should follow up by another, “That the Chairman be directed to move the House for Leave to bring in a Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.” In this Bill time might be given for that abolition, as to the House might seem meet.

Mr. Bailey rose to reply to *Mr. Wilberforce*; but he spoke in so low a voice, and there was so much noise in the gallery, by persons continually going in or out, that it was with very great difficulty we could here and there catch a sentence, which gave us any idea of what he was saying. At his desire, the Clerk read the Petition lately presented by Lord Sheffield, from the Planters and others interested in the Island of Jamaica, in which it was stated, that the slave trade had originally been undertaken in consequence of encouragement held out by Parliament, and particularly by the Acts of the 10th and 11th of William III. and 32d of George II. in which the Legislature, in express terms, declared, that the slave trade was absolutely *necessary* to the West India Islands.

Mr. Bailey observed, as soon as the Clerk had read the Petition, that he felt a very sincere respect for the private character of the Honourable Gentleman who had made the Motion, for he believed it to be truly amiable; he entertained also a very high opinion of the great abilities of two Right Hon. Gentlemen (*Mr. Pitt* and *Mr. Fox*) whom the arguments of the Honourable Member had made converts to his system, and who had both of them supported it with all their powers of eloquence in the last Session of Parliament. But, great as was his respect for all three, he must take the liberty of saying, that the prevalence of the opinions maintained by them would shake the British Islands in the West Indies, and endanger those valuable possessions. That he had an interest, and a deep one too, in the preservation and prosperity of those islands, he would not pretend to deny; for he was possessed of very considerable property there, both in lands and in Negroes; but he would at the same time maintain, that the people of England had an infinitely deeper interest in those colonies, because a very great proportion of their commerce, their revenue, and their navy, depended upon the flourishing state of those islands. They would surely then be extremely cautious how they treated a question which involved in its consequences all these important considerations, and might, by ruining our possessions in the West Indies, give a fatal blow to our manufactures, and throw the finances of this country into the greatest confusion. The humanity of the

House

House and the Nation had been pressed into the service of those who were advocates for the abolition of the slave trade; and accounts had been given, and industriously circulated through the kingdom, that cruelties, hitherto unheard of, had been exercised upon the unfortunate Negroes. But supposing some of these accounts had had a foundation in truth, they could not afford just grounds for charging the planters in general with cruel practices. As well might a foreigner arraign the character of the British nation, and say, that Britons were barbarous and cruel, if he was to form his judgment from a perusal of the printed trials at the Old Bailey. He could say for himself, that, having passed a considerable part of his life in the West Indies, he had never witnessed such barbarities as had been charged upon the planters; that the Negroes were not wretched and unhappy; that, on the contrary, they were more at their ease, more comfortable, and more contented, than the labouring part of this country, or of any other in Europe. Of late, indeed, symptoms of discontent had manifested themselves in some of the islands, and the slaves appeared to be dissatisfied with their condition. But he contended, that this was by no means the consequence of ill usage from their masters; it was the effect of the new doctrines broached in Europe by the advocates of a new-fangled system of humanity. It was not his intention to describe to the Committee, the horrors of the insurrection produced by this system in the island of St. Domingo. The discussion of last year had occasioned all the disturbances in that island, which had been sufficiently proved by the author of a pamphlet lately published in favour of the slave trade; a part of which he then read to the House. He said he would not shock the feelings of the Members, by tracing a faithful picture of the murder of infants, and the ravishing of beautiful women, in the presence of their husbands or parents; he would not call upon Gentlemen to cast a look upon the horrid and unnatural scene, in which fathers were butchered by the hands of their own children; nor would desire them to contemplate the desolation of the once most valuable and flourishing colony in the world, now a heap of ruins; but he would deprecate the adoption of the measure proposed for abolishing slavery, which could not fail to reduce our own colonies to the deplorable condition in which we all knew St. Domingo was at this moment.

If Gentlemen had turned their thoughts to the state of the Negroes, merely because they wanted objects upon which they might exercise their humanity, he would tell them that they need not travel so far as the West Indies in search of them, for they might find at home, in the streets, cellars, and garrets of the metropolis, persons whose situation was truly deplorable, and, com-

**

T t t

pared

pared with whom, the worse treated Negroes enjoyed happiness in a supreme degree.

That the condition of the Negroes might be rendered still more comfortable than it was, he would not pretend to deny: religion, if propagated among them, would not only add to their comfort, but, by its consequences, lead them to that disposition in which they might be capable of enjoying liberty. The slaves in the Roman Catholic Islands were instructed by the clergy of that religion with indefatigable care and industry, and the fruits of their labour were to be discovered in the improvement of the morals and understanding of the Negroes; but it unaccountably happened, that, in the British Colonies, the clergy of the established church, though their livings were extremely rich, were shamefully negligent of their duty, and took not the least pains to give the slaves an idea of religion. This, in his opinion, called for the interposition either of the Legislature, or of the spiritual superiors of the clergy; and he believed that nothing was wanting, but the inculcating of religious principles into the minds of the Negroes, to render their situation far superior to that of the lower orders of the people in England. With respect to the idea of abolishing the slave trade, he must resolutely oppose it, because he was convinced that the trade was absolutely necessary to the political existence of our West India Islands, and that the ruin of them would be the inevitable consequence of the abolition. He concluded by declaring the situation of the West-India Negroes to be comfortable; and that the witnesses who had given evidence in favour of the abolition, were a set of low, ignorant wretches, selected purposely from the refuse of mankind.

Mr. Vaughan followed *Mr. Bailey*, and took the same side of the question. He said, that, before he should enter into the detail of what he intended to say on this important subject, he deemed it necessary to make some few previous observations, for the purpose of removing certain prejudices, which might be entertained against him. It might be said he was a planter, and therefore not qualified to give an impartial vote upon the question for abolishing the slave trade. To this he would reply, that, though a planter, he had formerly entertained precisely the same ideas, respecting the condition of slaves in the West Indies, that were entertained by the Honourable and Humane Gentleman who had made the motion; and nothing could have made him renounce those ideas, but a voyage to Jamaica, which he undertook for the purpose of enabling himself to form a true judgment on the subject, on the evidence of his own eyes. If, therefore, he could, though a planter, think the state of Negroes truly wretched, whilst he judged only from the account of others, he could not be said to have been blinded by self, or to have sacrificed the feelings of his heart

heart to interest. On the other hand, having changed his mind, after he had visited Jamaica, for the sole purpose of seeing with his own eyes the state of the Negroes, he hoped Gentlemen would give him so much credit as to believe that the change, in his opinion, was purely the effect of conviction! He trusted, that all these previous observations would effectually remove the prejudices under which a person, circumstanced as he was, must rise to speak on such a question as the present. Having expressed this hope, he said, that his voyage to Jamaica had convinced him of this truth, of which Parliament and the whole nation appeared to be equally convinced, viz. that the Negroes were as yet unprepared for receiving and enjoying liberty; and every one would agree with him, that *civilization* should precede the grant of liberty. In a civilized state the *mind* had wants, but in slavery the *body* alone felt any. He was convinced also, that *white* people could not bear the heat of the climate between the tropics, if they were to go through the work performed by Negroes. If they could, the planters would be happy to employ them; for all they wanted was to have their work done: it was workmen, not slaves, that they stood in need of.

It had been said, that a number of instruments of torture were used for the purpose of exercising barbarous cruelties upon the Negroes: he declared that, for the seven months he resided upon his father's estate, he had never seen any. The only instruments of punishment he ever saw there, were the whip and the stocks. Others, indeed, might perhaps be in the towns, whither the most refractory were usually sent to be corrected by the proper officers. He was of opinion, that the whip alone would be sufficient to keep the slaves to their duty; and he did not know that that might not be effected even without the whip.

Gentlemen were taught by accounts, industriously circulated, that the slaves were wretched, and impatient of bondage. He could take upon him to say, that this was not the case: he had seen them, at the times of their diversions, as gay, as lively, and as merry, as any people he had ever seen in France. That they were not impatient of slavery, he inferred from this: he knew an overseer, who required his employer's slaves to work one night, after they had laboured very hard on that and the nine preceding days. The slaves murmured a little at this command; but as soon as the overseer said to them, What did your master buy you for but to work? they, struck with the justness of his argument, resigned themselves entirely to his discretion, and betook themselves to their labour.

The tenderness of the planters towards their slaves, on a thousand occasions, was proved by the evidence on the table, from which it appeared that a fee of 9l. had been given to medical persons

to attend females in difficult births. He had seen with his own eyes, the nurses visit the sick houses four or five times a day, and administer medicines to the sick with their own hands. When they were in sickness, they were attended by surgeons; and he knew several ladies who used to visit the huts of the sick, two, three, ay, four times a day, with parental solicitude.

He was ready to allow, however, that the situation of the blacks might be rendered still more comfortable. He thought that, if they were admitted to give evidence against white persons, no bad consequence would ensue. It might not be necessary to compel the Judge and Jury to receive their evidence; but still they might be directed to hear it.

He was of opinion, that the power which the overseers possess, of punishing or correcting the slaves, ought to be considerably curtailed. It might certainly be used with reason and moderation. There was a law, by which a planter was prevented from giving a slave more than thirty lashes at any one time. Some tied up their slaves eight or ten times in one day, which, *perhaps*, might be deemed rather too harsh; but it was very seldom that they were flogged so often. It might be proper to ordain, that no black should receive more than thirty-nine stripes in twenty-four hours.

It would be very fit also, that they should be instructed in principles of religion. It had been found that, in the islands ceded to us by France, the Negroes had been bred Catholics, and religion had greatly improved them; but, to the disgrace of the clergy, in all the islands that had been originally planted by the English, not the least pains had been taken by them to give the slaves even the smallest idea of religion. From this declaration, however, he must except some Moravians, who had endeavoured to make Christians of the Negroes. He wished that some of the Ministers of the Church of England, whom he then saw in the gallery, would bestow as much care in instilling religious principles into the minds of those poor ignorant people, as they did in representing them as in a deplorable state of wretchedness.

The mortality among the Negroes had been urged as a proof of the ill usage which they suffered. But this was a mistake. There were disorders peculiar to them, with which our physicians were totally unacquainted in Europe, for which they were unable to account, and which it was not in their power to cure. There was some one particular day within the first nine after the birth of a Negro, which might be denominated critical. On that day great numbers of them died; but such as survived it, were sure to thrive. Surely then the death of so many on the 3d, 6th, or 9th day, could not be set down to the account of ill usage.

It had been argued, that the decrease of their numbers in some islands proved that they had been treated cruelly. Now, he would
ask,

ask, had it not been found that the people of London had decreased in some particular years? And would any one say that it was by cruelty that their numbers were lessened? In many respects, the Negroes of the West Indies were treated less cruelly than the subjects of this country were. Here trifling thefts were punished with death; but there some light adequate corporal punishment was inflicted.

The *distributive justice* of the planters was remarkable, and worthy of imitation. If one Negro stole from another, the thief was sure of being severely punished: by this impartiality, the West India Gentlemen proved to the world, that they protect even the property of their slaves. In many respects, the slaves were in an enviable situation. If they married, and died, they were certain of having their children and widows well taken care of.

The frequent importations of African slaves were urged as proofs of mortality among the Negroes, and that mortality was said to be the consequence of ill usage. But the truth was, it ought fairly to be ascribed to other causes, the disproportion between the sexes, the number of those who remained in a state of celibacy, and the want of issue among those whom promiscuous debauchery rendered unfruitful. The mortality, and consequently the annual importations of slaves from Africa, might be prevented, if the morals of the blacks were improved by a sense of religion; if marriage was more encouraged among them; and if a premium was to be bestowed upon the father in proportion to the number of his children. It might be proper also to encourage them to industry, by enabling them to enjoy rationally the fruits of their labour. On his father's estate the Negroes were entitled to the *property* of every thing which they acquired by industry. He remembered that they had brought him pine apples, which they had cultivated for themselves, and offered them to sale at a certain price. He, thinking that they asked too much, would not buy them: they carried them elsewhere, and having sold them, purchased liquor, &c. which they drank with their friends in merriment and jollity.

He said that the planters stood in need of persons to work their estates; they cared not what was the complexion of those labourers; they would be glad to hire them in the islands, as workmen are in Europe, at so much per day. If Parliament could not find such for them, then it was bound not to deprive the colonies of the only means by which they could be supplied with workmen, namely, the slave trade.

The West India Islands at present were in a state of great prosperity, and it would be a very unjustifiable measure to deprive them of the means of increasing that prosperity, by purchasing Negroes, who were the only people that could work their lands,
and

and whom both their masters and mistresses treated with the utmost humanity. He enforced this position by a variety of facts, arising from his own knowledge, tending to show that the planters were greatly improved in the management of their slaves, especially in the Island of Jamaica, and that there was no good grounds whatever to go into a vote for the abolition.

Numerous combinations had taken place in England against the use of sugar, under the idea, that to eat it would be to consume the blood of the unfortunate Negroes. He condemned the combination, and shewed that sugar was a wholesome aliment, and that its cultivation was not accompanied by any severe labour on the part of the slaves, yet such as white people could not endure, which he asserted was confessed by the Sierra Leona Company in their late publication, a part of which he read, stating, that white people could not cultivate Africa; at the same time they alledged, that it was equal in climate to the West Indies. A planter in South Carolina said, that indigo was a bad thing to cultivate, because it was not good for either man or beast; the sugar cane was the very reverse, for it afforded nourishment to both.

His observations hitherto had been confined to the situation of the Negroes after their arrival, or birth, in the West Indies. He concluded with saying, that, with respect to the slave trade, the Honourable Gentleman, if he understood him right, had so framed his Motion, that those who were for an *immediate* abolition, and those who were for making it the gradual and progressive work of time, would equally have an opportunity of giving a satisfactory vote on the occasion. Should those who were against the abolition think, nevertheless, that, in process of time, it might take place without any bad consequence, they might vote for the Honourable Gentleman's motion; because they would find other stages of the business, in which they might take steps for putting off the evil day to as late a period as they could with propriety; or for proposing such measures, as should render the approach of it less dangerous to the planters and the empire.

Mr. Wilberforce said, that the Hon. Gentleman appeared to have thoroughly understood his Motion.

Mr. H. Thornton spoke decidedly for the abolition. He said, he sincerely regretted that some mercantile man, of more weight and ability than himself, had not risen to vindicate the honour of commerce, and rescue it from the disgraceful imputation, that it had, or could have, any thing in common with the slave trade, which was a scandalous traffic in human flesh. As no other person of commercial character had undertaken this task, he had resolved to take it upon himself. The two Honourable Gentlemen who had opposed his Honourable Friend's Motion, had both travelled to the West Indies; but they had not visited, even in imagination, the coast

coast of Africa, whence the wretched slaves were brought; nor had they thought proper to take the least notice of the enormities, so ably and pathetically described by his Honourable Friend, which disgraced the name of Englishmen on the coast of Africa. The two Honourable Members agreed, that it was necessary to the planters to find men to work their estates, and that, if they could not get them elsewhere, they must procure them from Africa. This somewhat resembled the advice of the father to his son,—“Get money honestly if you can; but at all events get money.” For it meant this:—“Workmen we wish to procure honestly, if we can; but, let us get them what way we may, we must have them at all events.”

He would not allow that the traffic in human flesh was a trade; he could view it in no other light than as a crime; and therefore he would not consent to any regulation of it, for he would not regulate a crime. He called upon all those to whom the character of a British merchant was dear, to come forward, and rescue that respectable name from disgrace, by putting an end to what was falsely called a branch of trade, but which was, in reality, nothing more than a system of cruelty, barbarity, rapine, and murder.

In addition to the instances of kidnaping given by Mr. Wilberforce, he gave some others that had occurred on the coast near the new settlement at Sierra Leona, in which he was concerned. A shot was one day heard; and, on enquiry, it was found to be a kind of *fue de joie* for the capture of an unfortunate man, who was to be sold as a slave. A man had actually sold his father, who was a rich man; and he redeemed himself by selling to the English some of his own slaves: thus was nature perverted by a commerce which we had introduced among the Africans.

Mr. Thornton read a letter from King Naimbaro, in the neighbourhood of Sierra Leona, who complained that three of his relations had been kidnaped, and carried off to the West Indies; where they were at that moment in a state of slavery. The letter was as follows:—“My subjects, and the subjects of other Kings, have been stolen away by the inhabitants of all nations who visit this coast. Three of my own relations have been taken away by a Captain Coxe, and sold for slaves; for what reason I know not. I never molested the property or person of others. I love the Natives of Great Britain—I have borne many insults from them, which have occasioned me to be silent so long—whether I shall see my relations again I know not, but those who took them will be called to account for their actions one day or another.” Mr. Thornton said such was the dreadful state of the country, that neither kings nor people were safe; and that, in fact, the greatest hinderance they had found to the establishment of the Sierra Leona Colony, was owing to the general dread and fear which the natives had to reside near the

coast; and that a principal hope in establishing that colony, and introducing industry and cultivation into Africa, depended upon the Motion before the House—the abolition of that trade.

Mr. Thornton insisted, that, as the trading in slaves was against every principle of justice, we ought to renounce it at once, and not suffer any miserable idea of policy to prevail, in making us retain what it was impossible for us to defend. He said, the coast near the new Settlement at Sierra Leona, had once been populous, and highly cultivated; but, in consequence of the appearance of our slave ships there, it was now almost a desert.

He maintained, that, by cultivating a good understanding with the people of the country, by encouraging them to cultivate the earth, and shewing a sacred regard for property, we might open a thousand channels of commerce with them, which might be carried on on both sides without a pang, or bringing a tear into the eye of humanity. The number of forts which we possessed along the coast, with districts round each of them, afforded us better means than any other European nation possessed, of giving the natives a taste for agriculture, and the true objects of commerce. He was of opinion, then, that we ought to avail ourselves of this circumstance, and renounce immediately the infamous slave trade, which was a reproach to us both as Christians and men.

He adverted to the Petitions before the House, which he maintained shewed the sense of the public, with regard to the general injustice of the trade; and that it was derogatory to the character and dignity of the nation, to suffer it to be carried on. He thought that, while the enemies of our invaluable constitution were endeavouring to sow the seeds of discontent, it would be highly incumbent for that House to evince to the public, that they were not the last to feel these public sentiments of justice, and that they should rather anticipate the public sentiments on every great point. He hoped, notwithstanding the variety of opinions which prevailed, that there would be this night an unanimous decision for the Question, and thereby shew that high sense of justice and humanity, for which this country had always stood pre-eminent.

Colonel Tarleton said, notwithstanding the indefatigable exertions of the Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce) and the numerous petitions which crowded the table from every part of Great Britain, he should not shrink from the discussion, but proceed to argue against a speculation which he deemed chimerical and destructive. Humanity was a passion seldom applied to in vain; but he should beg to remind the Committee, that, to be estimable, it ought to be tempered with justice. After the ample discussion of last Session upon the subject, he should not find it necessary to go to great lengths; and, in what he should say, he should not lose sight of that philanthropy by which the advocates for the abolition
of

of the slave trade pretended to be governed. He might suffer it to be decided without discussion, as many ministerial questions had in the course of the Session; but, as the representative of a great trading town, and a friend to the interests of the country in general, he should not form his conduct by such examples. He should not recur to the origin of the trade, or enumerate the parliamentary sanctions which it had from time to time received; nor yet contrast the lenity of the West India Government with the savage ferocity of the African Princes; but point out the policy of continuing the trade, and the impracticability of its abolition. If we were inclined to relinquish the traffic, the other nations of Europe would not, as the Honourable Gentleman contended, follow our example, but would make their advantage of our folly. The Dutch and the French would deride us for giving up our share in a beneficial commerce, which would nevertheless go on. The losses would be ours; the profit would be theirs. An equal number of slaves would continue to be imported into the West Indies; and the case of the African would be exactly the same, whether he crossed the Atlantic in an English or any other European bottom.

Much force of logic was not necessary to detect the fallacies, and expose the mistaken zeal, of the sectaries, who patronized this measure. Plain reason would go beyond sophistry and enthusiasm; and he should be able, without any laboured ingenuity, or pathetic efforts, to dissipate the accusation of rapes, murders, impaling of children, and the long list of fancied horrors which haunted the imagination of the Honourable Gentleman. What had been the effect of such doctrines being disseminated amongst the slaves in the islands? Plots, massacres, and insurrections, which had obliged Ministry, after making a parade of reducing the military establishment, to send out troops for their suppression; and if the chimerical Resolution proposed to the Committee should be carried, all the troops of Great Britain might in a short time find employment in the West Indies.

The statements of the people certainly deserved every respect; but, in the present case, they were not fairly obtained. Of the petitions on the table, very few had so much as been read in the town-halls where they were supposed to be voted. The people had been tricked out of their humanity by hearsay of what passed in that House; and the circulation of despicable pamphlets, through the agency of advertising empirics, and itinerant clergymen. Every grammar school in the country had received a ceremonious visit from the friends of the abolition. The boys had been promised holidays for signing their names, and the names of all the neighbours which they could collect. When all was not

**

U u u

sufficient,

sufficient, they were desired to exercise their inventive powers, to let imagination loose,

“————— And give to airy nothing
“ A local habitation, and a name.”

Was this a decorous mode of collecting the voice of the people? Could it be called the sense of the people? No; it was equally a mockery on the people, and on the House of Commons.

He here read a letter from a Quaker in Warwickshire, informing him, that his son, who had just returned from school, gave him an account, as above, of a petition against the slave trade, which the boys had been instructed to sign with any names, real or imaginary. He had another from a school boy at Chester, who was the only boy of the school he was at that had not signed a similar petition. To the same purpose he had letters from Sheffield, and many other places, making no less than *a whole port-folio full*.

If he should contrast this conduct of the enemies of the African trade with that of Lord Rodney, Mr. Baillie, Mr. Vaughan, &c. &c. in giving their testimony upon the subject, it would be to contrast fair with foul; malignity, enthusiasm, and ignorance, with candour, ingenuousness, and veracity; the pride and honour with the shame and disgrace of human nature.

The trade, it had been said, was no more than a lottery, even at Liverpool, by which more was lost by the many than was gained by the few. He could assure those who said so, that it was still a trade highly profitable; by no means so ruinous either to the fortunes or the morals of those concerned in it as the State Lottery. The abolition would throw many thousands of seamen and manufacturers out of employment, who could not soon, if ever, be otherwise provided for; and, besides the great injury to commerce and the revenue, there would be West India property, estimated at seventy millions, utterly ruined, and, in justice, to be made good to the proprietors.

Considered in a commercial view only, a *deficit* of four millions per annum would be deeply felt by this nation, flourishing as was its commerce, independent of the total loss of the West India Islands, which would be the probable consequence.

As a nursery for seamen too, notwithstanding what the Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Wilberforce) had stated, the African Trade was the most valuable England had; for, admitting the fabricated mortality which had been argued upon, Liverpool alone contributed to the navy of Great Britain, an annual augmentation, on an average, of nine hundred and fifty men, converted from landmen to seamen.

His account of deaths amongst the slaves on the Middle Passage, the Honourable Gentleman had taken from times prior to the regulations. Those had, he admitted, been extremely useful. Since they had been adopted, the mortality amongst the slaves had not been so great as before, and was less, in proportion to the numbers, than that amongst the convicts sent from this country to Botany Bay.

Opposition to the Resolution before the Committee, was, in his mind, so intimately connected with the prosperity and constitution of Great Britain, that, if he were an enemy to both, he should vote for the abolition of the African trade. England's debts were so enormous, and her credit so entirely depended upon her commerce, that, instead of circumscribing any means of traffic, the House should consider how to swell the tide of trade, and give sinew to enterprize. If the trade were now to begin, he should be zealous against it, but now would protect it. By mediatory means abuses might be rectified; but, with hostile hands to destroy it, would be to be *guilty of a suicide upon our laws, our commerce, and our constitution.*

He trusted that there was more common sense in the House, than to give way to vague speculations; and although there might be regulations to prevent captains treating the slaves with inhumanity, he trusted the sentiment of the House would be against any thing like an abolition, or giving any countenance to a speculation at once vague and pernicious to the true interests of the country.

Mr. M. Montague, whilst he insisted that it was the duty of the Legislature to apply effectual remedies to all existing evils, allowed that it was no less than duty to do so with as little injury as possible to the interests of those concerned. But, in the present case, he could see no remedy short of an utter abolition. No regulation could be a sufficient protection to the slaves which did not make the evidence of a slave admissible against his master; and this he conceived would be more dangerous to the masters than the abolition of the African Trade. The abolition therefore was the only safe and effectual remedy. Upon the coasts of Africa, it was impossible to erect courts of judicature, to determine whether the slaves offered for sale deserved their fate; and if it were possible on the coasts, it could not reach the interior parts, whence most of those unhappy creatures were brought: and, in the West Indies, who could be trusted for the upright execution of such an office? Suppose even the Honourable Mover of the Resolutions, beyond whom no man could go in active philanthropy, were appointed to such a duty, it would be impracticable for him to redress half the grievances, as they would be carefully concealed from his knowledge. What remedy then was there, but

to make it the indisputable interest of the master to treat them with the utmost lenity their condition would admit.

Liverpool merchants, and other interested persons, must be expected to oppose the Resolution; but he put it to the conscience of Gentlemen, whether they ought to be influenced in their votes by the assertions of those who were manifestly ignorant of what they were so deeply interested in. He thought it a disgrace to the Legislature to hesitate between justice and expediency, but should even be content to rest his arguments solely on the policy of the trade, and had no fears of being refuted by those who spoke without serious consideration, or perhaps upon the assurance of their friends, that the measure would be disadvantageous.

The country at large had spoken upon the subject, and their voice was responsive to the opinions of the best men, and the best politicians, of the age. Whatever ridicule the Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Tarleton) might endeavour to cast upon it—it was his interest to do so—he would venture to say, was as *unfounded in fact, as it was inapplicable to the argument*. He went at some length into the abuses practised in the various stages of the trade; warned Gentlemen to be careful how they voted on the information of persons interested, without examining the evidence; said his Right Honourable Friend (the Chancellor of the Exchequer) had clearly proved last year, that the policy of the abolition was equal to the justice; and concluded by declaring, that the cause of the slaves should never want an advocate while he lived; and that he would rather lay down his life, than relinquish his hopes of seeing that detestable traffic abolished.

Mr. Whitbread said, the arguments adduced to prove that the trade was neither founded in justice or policy, had so completely failed, that he could not hesitate a moment in the vote he was about to give. Were it possible for him to conceive, as some of the advocates for the trade endeavoured to prove, that the Negroes were rescued from torment, or from death, in Africa; that they were transported in the most commodious manner to the happier clime of the West India Islands; that there, instead of painful and extorted toil, they passed the day in healthful and easy labour, the evening in chearful and innocent recreation, retired to rest with bodies unfatigued, and hearts at ease, and rose alert and vigorous in the morning, to pursue the same course; were he to believe that in sickness they were attended with tenderness and care, and that their old age was worn out in peace and plenty—even then he should vote for the abolition; for he could never forget that slavery was one of the worst of evils, and that no practice could sanction a principle essentially and radically wrong. He could not forget that they were forcibly torn from their country, and all that human affections rendered most dear; that,
where

where man was delivered over to man, there must be tyranny, on the one hand, and a deep sense of injury on the other; that it was the quality of despotism to corrupt the heart; and that, without the aid of such corruption, many were by nature unfeeling and cruel. But there were many expressions of the Gentlemen who wished to represent the condition of the slaves in the fairest point of view, that convinced him of the existence of cruelties disgraceful to humanity. In an account of selling off the stock of a plantation, it was said, that the slaves fetched less than the common price, *because they were damaged*.—Damaged!—How damaged?—What was this but an admission that they were worn down by labour, sickness, or age; and that, instead of receiving the indulgence their situation required, they were to be transferred from one task-master to another; the latter, perhaps, more inhuman than the former. It was said by the author of a pamphlet on the subject, that a good Negro needed no character; for that fetters would gall, and the whip make wails; and the slave who bore not those indelible marks, had certainly never deserved the punishment. Then it must be true, that fetters and whips were the instruments of punishment; and that both were inflicted, till the marks of the galling and the wails became indelible.

The Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Vaughan) who had said in explanation, that he never should possess a slave, had said before, that, on going to the West Indies, he was surprized to find the slaves so well treated. But, said he, the blacks are all degraded: put slavery out of the question, and their state is as comfortable as that of the lower orders in England. That was the very object of the Resolution. The very thing wished for, was to remove that distinction, which sunk them below the level of their fellow creatures. The Honourable Gentleman had also said, that one of the overseers, in chiding the slaves, had asked, “for what did your master buy you?” What answer should be returned to this, but the wails and galls which, it could not be denied, exist?

But an Honourable Gentleman (Mr. Tarleton) in animadverting upon the petitions, had said, they were obtained by collusion and artifice. He had the honour to present one from his constituents, and felt himself bound to say, that it was signed by no names but the most respectable. The Honourable Gentleman had also said, they were all to one purpose. This was most certain, and could not be otherwise, proceeding all upon the same principles, and to the same object. They had but one plain tale to tell, and that they told it pretty nearly in the same way, was rather a test of truth, than a proof of collusion. They contained the genuine sentiments of a majority of the people, and could not be invalidated by the letter of a nameless Quaker, or a Chester school-boy.

The

The supporters of the abolition had been charged with enthusiasm. He was as strenuous a supporter of that measure as the Honourable Gentleman who moved it; but he had never entertained, any more than that Honourable Gentleman, the doctrine invidiously imputed to him, an immediate emancipation of the slaves in the islands. The Honourable Gentleman knew too well, that neither their habits, their characters, nor their degree of instruction, made them capable of immediate emancipation with any benefit to themselves; and he was too wise and temperate to entertain such a wild idea. Was this a proof of fanaticism, or of cool and moderate enquiry? A system of gradual emancipation, so ably stated last year by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was what every rational man had in view.

The Gentleman who spoke second (Mr. Baillie) had said something of the two great orators, who were the pride and the ornament of that House, (Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox,) and had given, he thought, rather too much credit to his Honourable Friend, for having, by his exertions, brought them both to his opinion. He believed they had been persuaded by the manifest justice and wisdom of the proposition, as it appeared to their own minds; and if any thing extraneous could operate on him in the present question, it was that two gentlemen, so eminent over all their countrymen, who were in habits of opposition to each other, should agree in this. What was it that had united them, but the clearness of their understandings, and the force of truth?

Mr. Whitbread said he disclaimed all exultation on the calamities of St. Domingo. If there were any persons who felt such exultation, let them be pointed out, in order to be driven from the society of those who supported better principles, on better grounds. But he denied that these calamities were owing to the debates on the slave trade; they were owing to the trade itself. There was a point of endurance, beyond which human nature could not go; and the mind rose by its native elasticity, with a violence proportioned to the degree to which it had been depressed. Whence did the Negroes in St. Domingo learn the cruelties they had practised? whence, but from those on whom they had practised them?—"Hath not an African eyes? Hath not an African hands, organs, dimensions, senses, passions? Is he not fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer as we are? If you prick him, does he not bleed? If you tickle him, does he not laugh? If you poison him, does he not die? And if you wrong him, shall he not revenge? If he is like you in the rest, he will resemble you in that. If an African wrong a white man, what is his humility?—revenge. If a white man wrong an African, what

“ what should his sufferance be by our example ? Why, revenge.
“ The cruelty you teach him, he will execute.—But I fear it is not
“ possible to better the instruction.”

Mr. Milbanke made a short and pertinent speech in favour of the Question, ending with an emphatic declaration, that where there was slavery, there must be oppression, and therefore he would vote with the Honourable Gentleman who made the Motion.

Mr. Dundas observed, that as, on no occasion hitherto, he had given his public opinion on the subject, he flattered himself he should be indulged with a short audience. Although he approved of the general principles which actuated his Honourable Friend (*Mr. Wilberforce*) yet he differed with him in his mode, therefore it was impossible for him to give his consent to the proposition. The two parties which were at issue on the business, proceeded to extremities in the maintenance of their opinions. Those who spoke in favour of the abolition, avowed their sentiments without reserve. Those of the contrary disposition, acted also without any mental reservation. Hence appeared some difficulty in conciliating the disputants. It had been urged as an argument for the planters, that the continuance of the slave trade was necessary for the existence of our West India Colonies. He had, however, no hesitation in declaring, that this hypothesis was not only unfounded in truth, but that the slave trade itself was impolitic and detestable. He reprobated the traffic, if it could be called by that name : he was certain, that it was neither founded in justice or policy : at the same time he was well aware, that many had involved their property in the West Indies, under the faith and encouragement of Parliament, and many had lent their money on West India property. With all the unbounded esteem which he had for *Mr. Wilberforce*, whose head and heart acted in unison, and were directed by the noblest and most independent motives, he was, upon reflection, convinced, that an immediate abolition of the slave trade would tend to retard or interrupt what he meant to accelerate. Instead of subverting the prejudices and passions of men, he provoked the opposite sentiments, by arousing jealousies and alarms for the interests of those concerned in the settlements in the West Indies. Surveying the question through a different medium, he would endeavour to reconcile the contending powers by principles of moderation. It had always been the invariable maxim of Parliament to protect the patrimonial rights of the people. The West India Planters had embarked a very large capital on that faith ; and they had obtained money on the confirmed belief, that their property would be sanctioned and guarded by the various Acts of Parliament. It therefore became the House to recollect

the

the compact with the planters; and, notwithstanding the clamour excited, to exert themselves in its maintenance.

It had been affirmed, with much propriety of argument, that were we wholly to relinquish the slave trade with the precipitancy proposed, other nations would adopt it as the source of riches. This observation, he confessed, had considerable weight in his mind; and he apprehended that were both Bristol and Liverpool to abandon the system, slaves would be imported by the Dutch from Africa; and from St. Eustatius, and other ports, they would supply the wants of our West India Islands. Yet, when he mentioned these objections, he disclaimed the continuance of the trade indefinitely. All the inconveniencies might be avoided, and the trade abolished, by proper regulations, perhaps more speedily than by his Honourable Friend's own plan. He did not propose a system of regulation to perpetuate the trade, but a system that should carry in it the seeds of abolition. He then proposed certain regulations or modifications. The first tended to increase the native Negroes in the West Indies; the second the immediate Abolition of hereditary slavery in the same Islands; and the third, the gradual Abolition, by a limited duration for the Slave Trade from Africa. Thus he would gradually and experimentally remove the fears and alarms of the planters, and further the abolition so much wished for. Notwithstanding the illustrious and invincible talents of Mr. Fox and Mr. Pitt, who seemed to agree on the practicability of immediate abolition, and proved their theories with all the clearness and force of conviction to be expected from their great abilities, still persons concerned in West India property would have reason to complain that their property was hazarded on theory; that they had no security for it but arguments, by which they themselves were not convinced. In the other mode they would have all the certainty of experiment.

Mr. Dundas said, he was fully persuaded that the property of the planters should not be exposed to the reveries of theory and speculation, but be placed upon that firm foundation, which should go to the total annihilation of hereditary slavery. He should just suggest the manner in which he thought this might be accomplished. The planter who was the owner of the father, in his opinion, should take care of the child from the moment of its birth; take care to have him inspired with a sense of religion; and when he had attained to a certain age, the boy, in return, should serve him for so many years, till he had repaid him the expence of his education: the consequence of this must be visible; thus nurtured in the principles of religion, he would be filled with a just sense of duty and gratitude. If his master was a humane man, he would feel a consolation in what he had done. The parents would also turn with gratitude to their owner, and forget their miseries in the prospects

pects of the happiness of their offspring. The rising generation thus trained, and conducted in the paths of piety, would be attached to the island, and of course, in the hour of danger, spring forward in the defence of it. Was this visionary? he trusted not. He was well convinced that the heart of an African was susceptible of the finest impressions of gratitude, as experience had evinced; that it was also susceptible of all the tenderest emotions of love. Thus the island might be said to be secured by its own offspring. If these propositions should not receive the consent of the House, although he was doubtful how he should vote, yet he saw no reason why he should not support Mr. Wilberforce's Motion, it compelling no one to any particular system, but only to the general abolition. He most earnestly solicited all the Gentlemen interested in the question to support the modification; and he avowed, that he would sooner see all the lands in the West India Islands cultivated by freemen than by slaves. God forbid that he should refuse freedom to the natives of Africa. He hoped that they would experience the honour and justice, by the wise and gradual abolition of the slave trade. The injustice, the inhumanity of it had gone abroad, and made deep impressions on the people; that circle was every day increasing, and, contrary to every other circle, it gathered strength as it extended: the cries of those captives had assailed the ears of millions; and it was morally impossible that the interest of a few could resist the calls of justice and humanity; they would be heard in the end; and who could say what revolution might happen in Africa? the light of heaven might shine on that country; and, as soon as it did, the trade of slavery would melt before it.

Mr. Long, who might be depended on, as he wrote his History at a period when there was very little, nay, perhaps not a distant gleam of the present Motion, says, that the dangers to the planters in the West Indies are from the frequent importation of strange slaves, who had been denominated the Rogues, Rascals, and Refuse of Africa. Requesting the planters to recede from their obstinacy, by condescending to accept of a modification, or gradual abolition, he instanced, that, should an enlightened Prince appear in Africa, the whole system of traffic would be completely subverted, and the British traders expelled from that quarter of the globe. Should those interested encourage a spirit of resistance, they might rest assured that this impolitic trade would be of a very short duration; and that, by its continuance, they constantly introduced an enemy into the bosom of their possessions in the West Indies—To illustrate the topic of discussion, he referred to an instance of the abolition of slavery in the northern parts of the kingdom. What was the situation of an inferior description of men then? [This exciting some consternation, Mr. Dundas, looking for Mr. Sheridan,

**

X x x

ironically

ironically remarked, that he did not mean the Scotch Boroughs !] The laugh having ceased, Mr. Dundas, alluding to the Parliamentary Proceedings of the year 1775, stated, that, previous to that period, the colliers, salters, or those employed under ground, were in a state of slavery; and that, when it was proposed to acknowledge them as free citizens, a clamour was excited, that those concerned in the properties of the collieries would be ruined; that the slavery of the poor people was a necessary evil; and that, to grant them freedom, would raise the price of coals beyond the capacity of their fellow citizens. These assertions, however, proved nugatory: the property was not injured; “and the idea of an advance in the price of coals vanished in smoke!”

He offered another argument in favour of his modification. The gradual regulations adopted for the Middle Passage, which had at first been resisted, had been attended with salutary consequences. Addressing himself to the more moderate, who were interested in the honour and justice of their country, he urged them to aid him in conciliating the affections of their opponents, and to protect private property. He concluded with moving an Amendment, by inserting the words “Gradual Abolition,” &c.

Mr. Addington (the Speaker) said, he had never listened with greater satisfaction, in his life, to any speech, than to the whole of that just delivered by his Right Honourable Friend, who had relieved him from the utmost pain and anxiety. He declared, that he was one of those alluded to by his Right Honourable Friend, who had preferred a middle path in regard to the abolition of a trade, or rather a crime, which he had never heard mentioned, without feeling the utmost abhorrence and detestation. Hitherto he had been silent on the subject, because he had felt that he could not go the length of voting with his Honourable Friend, who had introduced the question of the abolition of the trade into that House; but now he had heard what he could concur in with ease to his mind, and satisfaction to his conscience. He complimented Mr. Whitbread on his eloquent speech, and agreed with him in thinking that the slave trade, however modified, could not be defended, because no argument could justify the selling of one man for money to the despotism of another man, and tearing him away, against his will, from his country, his family, and his friends, in order to make him drag out a miserable existence in bondage in a distant country, to which he was an utter stranger. While he turned with disgust from the hateful trade, he saw the necessity of considering the opposite claims; and was also fearful that the trade, if relinquished by us, might be carried on in a manner more repugnant to the interests of humanity. He thought these opposite interests would be in a great degree reconciled by the scheme of a gradual abolition. He suggested, that the imports of slaves into the
islands

islands, should be limited to *ten* or *twelve* years. He contended that Negroes, notwithstanding the difference of their colour, ought to be regarded as human creatures. He condemned the slave trade as a measure which he had always abhorred. The nervous eloquence of his Honourable Friend recalled to his memory the observations of a very venerable and eminent judge, now in retirement, and in the vale of years, (Lord Mansfield,) who, when charged with showing too much lenity to a rebel lord, said, that he knew no language which could add guilt to treason. In the same view, he knew no language which could add to the horrors of the slave trade; and the proposition now before them would undoubtedly tend to prevent man from preying upon man. Mr. Addington said, the present state of the Negroes in the West India Islands certainly was inadequate to the necessary supply to do the work of the planters; there was too unequal a comparison between the males and females: he not only, therefore, considered an immediate abolition of the importation of the African Negroes as impolitic, but should think a duty on the importation of male Negroes would operate as a bounty on the importation of female slaves, and in a few years the defect would be supplied. Mr. Dundas's proposition, Mr. Addington said, appeared to him to be such as could not be opposed by any rational objection; he agreed with him in the whole of it, one point excepted, viz. the making those Negro children free who were born of slaves. He thought rather, that they should have their freedom after a period of service of ten or fifteen years, to pay their masters for the expence of rearing and educating them. A bounty for such as should rear more children, bearing a proportion to the sexes, payable to such Negro fathers, might, he conceived, produce the most salutary effects, and greatly tend to increase the population of the Negroes. He declared, he did not think his Right Honourable Friend would have submitted his ideas to the House, if he had not meant to state them afterwards in the form of a substantial proposition: he therefore hoped that his Honourable Friend's Motion (Mr. Wilberforce's) would not be adopted, but that his end would be answered by other means.

Mr. Fox, in a most able and animated speech, reprobated the suggestions of Mr. Dundas and Mr. Addington, pronouncing what had fallen from them to be the most formidable and alarming opposition that had yet been offered to the important question of the abolition of the slave trade. He arose, therefore, with an anxious desire to relieve the painful sensations of his mind, and to do away the deceptions and delusions that were endeavoured, not intentionally, he believed, to be set before the eyes of the public, to misguide and mislead their judgment, and the judgment of that House. He considered the idea of continuing the slave trade, as

nothing else than an idea of continuing the encouragement of the crimes of *robbery and murder*, and those under circumstances of perpetration the most flagitious and atrocious. He compared the proposition of Mr. Wilberforce, and the proposition of Mr. Dundas, and maintained, that the latter was a visionary attempt to violate that property which Mr. Dundas had affected to hold sacred, since it went to an interference with the slaves already in the West India Islands, over whom that House had no sort of right whatever; and at the same time to agree to a continuance of that worst of all evils, the taking away the African Negroes from their own country by force and violence, and dragging them to our islands, to spend the remainder of their wretched lives in the most degrading state of slavery. Mr. Wilberforce's proposition, on the other hand, Mr. Fox said, was a wise one, less visionary, and ten thousand times more practicable. It proposed only to do that which that House had the power to effect, viz. to abolish the trade to Africa altogether. He, for his part, scorned half-measures. He now came boldly forward to avow his sentiments, and to declare that he was astonished at the unprecedented moderation of those Gentlemen who *pretended* to befriend the abolition. Disclaiming all deception, he would cheerfully support the measure of Mr. Wilberforce, who had exerted himself with uncommon ability on this occasion. The partial continuance of the slave trade reminded him of a passage in Middleton's *Life of Cicero*, a book of great and deserved reputation. It was not, however, the translation which recommended it; that every man of learning would acknowledge was sufficiently bad. When he quoted the passage now alluded to, he hoped he should not be charged with provoking wantonly the risibility of the House. It was in his opinion an excellent illustration—A man might break open a house at midnight, for the purpose of robbery, and might murder the father, mother, children, and domestics—but, said the passage, *all this might be done with moderation.* [*A loud laugh.*] Absurd as this was, and fit only for laughter, so, in like manner, by this sort of reasoning, we might proceed in this trade—We might rob, plunder, kidnap, murder, and depopulate a whole country with *moderation*. He professed no moderation—there could be no qualification of such guilt—he was equally an enemy to all their regulations—regulations as disgraceful as they would be impotent.

The Right Honourable Gentleman who led the way in this new plan of moderation, proposed that hereditary slavery should be annihilated, but the mode was curious—The child was to be free born, instructed in the principles of freedom; for he was to be instructed in the duties of religion, which inculcate a rational freedom; and when he had attained to an age in which those principles

principles

ciples might be supposed to have taken root, he was to pay for those principles by becoming a slave. Such were the charms of liberty, that the very idea of attaining it one day or other, sweetened the nauseous draught of slavery—but that a person should purchase slavery at the expence of freedom, was inverting the order of things indeed.

The other Gentleman (the Speaker) proposed that a premium should be allowed for the transportation of females. Was the kidnapper to be encouraged to lay the snare for the unsuspecting maid, to snatch her from the arms of her lover, or her parents, or to transfer the mother from the embraces of her spouse to the arms of him between whom there could be no attachment, but that sympathy which arose from captivity? He should like to see the Clause by which this inhuman measure was to be presented to the Parliament of England. He should like to see the man with a mind capable of conceiving words to frame such a Clause. Was there a Gentleman in the House bold enough to support it? For the honour of Parliament, he hoped that there was no such man.

When he considered that the present was not a question of moderation, but of *justice*, he expressed his surprize that Gentlemen should entertain the smallest hesitation. The Speaker had very laudably reprobated the trade with the utmost abhorrence, and yet refused to support the original Motion. Did the vote to which they were called, pledge them to any particular system of abolition? No. Then why not pass the Resolution now, and object to and amend any future Motion?

He exposed in the same way the regulations of Mr. Dundas, who wished to begin by emancipation, instead of abolishing the trade; who called a mere regulation of trade an invasion of property, and who himself proposed the very extinction of that property in the first instance. This country began to feel as it ought this disgraceful trade. It began to hate itself for having countenanced robbery and murder. It had been well compared to the crimes that were the object of discussion at the Old Bailey; but it was not remembered that the very same offences which at that tribunal were punished with death, gave reward to the persons engaged in this trade. He was a Member of the Committee who had conducted this question, and he heartily approved of the pains that had been taken to circulate knowledge, and to publish the evidence; that evidence ought to be in every man's hands. It had been objected to this evidence, that some of the witnesses were poor, as if poverty and veracity were incompatible; and Lord Rodney, and other great names, were quoted as contradicting it. Neither the evidence of Lord Rodney, nor any other of the distinguished officers, did contradict any part of it. Upon that
evidence

evidence it appeared, that 22,000 Negroes were annually torn by base and wicked means from their native homes, and dragged into slavery; and they were said to be convicts—Convicts, made so for the purpose of being sold—They were convicted of witchcraft—and we went to Africa to punish witchcraft, because we had no such crime at home! Adultery was another crime for which we dragged these miserable fellow creatures into slavery. Surely, if adultery deserved to be so punished, we had no need to go out of England to find criminals.

Last Session we were entertained and cajoled, that something would early be brought forward. Have we not passed a year, and nothing has been done? Are we to be still deluded and betrayed? All our promises are vanished into smoke and air; and the Africans condemned to be oppressed, plundered, and murdered. It is exceedingly hard and unjust, that, because we suffered our credulity to be imposed upon last Session, we should this day be insulted by a similar mode of subterfuge. Why was not the system of moderation proposed then? Why were we not entertained by the proposition for a gradual abolition? As to the new mode mentioned, it would invade private property, by emancipating the slaves in the West India Islands.

He said, he was persuaded the country felt the question of the abolition as it ought; from the number of petitions on the table; and he answered Colonel Tarleton's remarks on them, by shewing that the letters he had produced, wanted at least as much authenticity as the petitions which the Colonel had attempted to invalidate.

It was absurd to propose, that, after a servitude of twelve or fifteen years, the youths should be presented with their freedom. Could any man for a moment imagine, that a person was better calculated to enjoy freedom after a servitude of the time alluded to, than if he had continued free from his birth? Oh, but say the advocates for continuing the trade, we do not mean to urge the question chiefly upon these grounds. We talk of the impolicy of renouncing the measure, when it will be immediately adopted by some other European power. I would rather (says Mr. Fox) permit the colonies to be supplied by all the nations in Europe, than sully our national glory by such abominable practices. It was true, as mentioned by an Honourable Gentleman, that the facts appeared in the papers now upon the table; but the national character was no more to be taken from these papers than from the records of the *Old Bailey*! When such detestable acts were investigated, it was exceedingly natural for the Honourable Member to make a bold reference to the proceedings of the *Old Bailey*. The difference, however, was very obvious. We sent our malefactors to Botany Bay, after the fair and unbiassed condemnation

demnation of a jury; but the African traders consigned the innocent victims of their vengeance to rapine and murder.

The planters pretended to affirm, that, because the Africans were poor people, their case should not be attended to. Was it an impossibility that poverty, veracity, and misfortune, might not be exemplified in the same unfortunate persons? Such an argument was indeed like the juggling of an Old Baily Counsel, who endeavoured to serve his client by every trick and stratagem. The truth of all the facts alluded to, had been fully proved before a jury, in the case of M^dDowall against Gregson and Company. He was therefore more and more astonished that they should be attempted to be refuted. The friends of the new cause had been accused of enthusiasm. He gloried in such an instance of enthusiasm, without which nothing great or good had ever been achieved. The poor Africans have been charged with the want of civilization. Our infamy and oppression has not only retarded the progress of civilization, but deprived them of their senses—and thence it is modestly observed—Oh, don't mind these men—they are Savages! I do not solicit you on the principle of tenderness (says Mr. Fox) I call upon you to discharge your duties as men, to act with justice and honour. The difference of colour is a wretched argument. Suppose, in the present turbulence and confusion in France, the aristocrats were to overcome the democrats, seize, and send them as slaves to the West Indies, would not England, would not all Europe, revolt at the outrage? Then what difference between the one case and the other? Aristotle, one of the most ingenious and acute men that ever lived, after the most profound research, to discover why those under subjection to the Greeks were slaves, could afford no better reason, but because the Barbarians were an unfair class of men, the Greeks were therefore born to controul and enslave them! This was a futile reason indeed, ill suited to the penetration of such a wonderful genius, but calculated to support a wretched system of philosophy! Aristotle durst not avow his real sentiments; and those who support the slave trade, without weighing the consequences in their minds, imitate the abominable example.

He shewed that the instance of what had passed in Camerone river, stated by Mr. Wilberforce, stood proved by evidence adduced regularly and formally, upon oath, in the Court of Common Pleas; that a Jury had there given a verdict upon it, under the direction and approbation of Lord Chief Justice Loughborough. It was therefore a fact unquestionably ascertained.

Mr. Fox then went through all the means that were used to trepan, to steal, to rob, and to procure slaves in Africa, by war, instigated on purpose by treachery of all kinds; and he said, of those things they had ample and legal evidence, substantiated even

in

in our courts of law. He desired the Gentlemen to put the case to their own hearts, and to demand whether it was a philosophical opinion, that colour could take from a human being his feelings? If they were brute beasts, nay, if they were inanimate goods, he would be against the traffic. He desired that they should yield it up; not as a boon to the people, but to rescue them from the opprobrium. He desired them to do their duty, without caring whether other nations followed their example: he had no fear but the example would be followed for the reputation of this country, for its wisdom was as high as was its prosperity. The question must be carried, for it should incessantly be moved. He would never abandon it but with his breath. "So long (said Mr. Fox) as I have a voice, I will raise it in vindication of the oppressed Africans. Let us then enter into an association to press it, whatever may be our situations, and however small may be our numbers. Let us enter into an indissoluble compact to prevent man from preying upon man! And let us not disgrace ourselves, year after year, to gratify the avarice of the West India Planters!" He described the great difference between political and personal slavery; and said, the most wretched peasant, in the most despotic state, was as much above a slave, as an Englishman was above such peasant. He gave a warning to the planters and merchants not to resist what they could no longer maintain; and said that if, after the abolition, a case for compensation could be made out, he would not shrink from the duty of meeting it liberally.

Mr. Dundas rose to explain; but chiefly to bring his proposition to a point, by moving to insert the word "gradually" in the Question, by way of Amendment, which he moved accordingly.

Mr. Jenkinson rose, and began with expressing the regret he felt whenever he differed with those with whom he used to act. He declared that he had only to hope that the House, in their decision, would be swayed rather by the weight of the argument that might have been urged, than by any eloquence that might have been exerted on that occasion. The question before the House, *Mr. Jenkinson* said, was, whether, under all the circumstances of the case, on the abolition of the slave trade taking place, their fellow creatures would be benefited, as some Gentlemen seemed to imagine? He maintained the negative. He thought that, when the matter was fully considered, the humanity of the cause would be found to be against the abolition, rather than for it. He proceeded to argue the question, with a view to the establishment of this proposition. The subject, he said, necessarily divided itself under three heads, the situation of the Negroes on the coasts of Africa, their situation in passing from Africa to the West India Islands, and their situation when in our West India Islands. With regard to the first of these, viz. their situation

on

on the coasts of Africa he contended, that the Africans were benefited by the trade; and, in elucidation of his opinions, entered into a very copious detail of the local customs of Africa. He was ready to admit, that many evils were endured in that quarter; but he questioned whether the House, proceeding to an immediate abolition, would effectually relieve them. Dutch agents, he had been well informed, had already been in England, to negotiate with our merchants, to supply them with African Slaves, should the British Parliament be inclined to abolish the trade. Mr. Jenkinson entered into a variety of calculations to prove, that the African slave trade was not near so fatal as had been stated by the Honourable Gentleman who had made the Motion; and also brought forward many facts, tending to shew, that the condition of the slaves in the West Indies was by no means so wretched as the picture drawn by the Honourable Gentleman's imagination had led him to conceive and depict in such gloomy colours, and in such affecting language, to the House. France, the country where fanaticism, and ideas of liberty, had been carried to an extent hitherto unheard of, and such as must disgust every one who regarded their affairs since the revolution, had already decided for its continuance, by a question agitated in the National Assembly. Portugal and Spain also gave as much encouragement as ever to the continuance of the trade. He spoke of the mortality even in the Middle Passage, as a point to which he had paid particular attention. It had formerly been stated to be at the rate of 3 per cent. It had since been reduced to one and an half, and last year to only one; and all these reductions had been occasioned by old regulations and improvements that had been adopted, while the Dutch lost at the rate of 7 per cent. and the French at the rate of 10 per cent..

The attention of the House was next called (Mr. Jenkinson observed) to the state of the Negroes in the West India Islands. Much had been said of the cruelties they suffered, and of the hardships they underwent. Tales of oppression had been told, and narratives of ill usage had been related, that were shocking to hear; but were they to form a general conviction from particular instances, which might be exaggerated? As well might they judge of their own constitution, from a statement of the few enormous abuses that were known to have been practised under it; and if they had deserved that degree of weight, they would have been so stated, when his Right Honourable Friend, with so much brilliant eloquence, recently dilated on the subject. He said, if we abolished the trade, it would still be the planters' interest to smuggle slaves; and it was well known that they were frequently stole from one place and conveyed to another, as interest required. By the better

**

Y y y

usage

usage lately introduced also, the births and deaths had been more nearly brought to a level; and in a few years he had no doubt but the islands would keep up their own stock. To the evidence on the table, which told against the continuance of the trade, Mr. Jenkinson said, he would oppose the names of Lord Rodney Admirals Barrington, Hotham, and Arbuthnot, Lords Rawdon and Macartney, who were at least equally respectable in character and brilliant abilities. After more argument, Mr. Jenkinson declared, that he was not for abolishing the slave trade immediately, but by degrees; and at least his opinion was sanctioned by most of the greatest philosophers and the wisest statesmen that ever lived. When a change was gradual, the consequence was only felt, and not the change itself, which latter was always dangerous.

Mr. Jenkinson took notice of what had fallen from Mr. Dundas, and said, he had put his own ideas upon paper, which he would state to the House. He then read the two following Resolutions. 1. An Address to his Majesty, that he would direct the Governors of the Islands to recommend to the Assemblies, to grant Premiums to the Proprietors or Overseers of Plantations, where the greatest Number of Children were reared. He proposed for Jamaica, Ten annual Premiums, from 500l. to 50l. and for the other Islands four Premiums, of from 300l. to 100l. To each Mother, who should rear five Children, a Bounty; and that there should be Schools erected and maintained in the Islands. 2. That a Bounty of 5l. per Head should be paid for every Woman under Twenty-five Years of Age, imported in any Ship, above the equal Proportion of males and females in the said Cargo.

These were his Propositions, and, that they might come regularly before the Committee, he moved that Sir William Dolben do now leave the Chair.

Mr. Pitt began by declaring, that, although he cordially concurred with the Right Honourable Gentleman opposite to him, in almost every point that he had stated, he differed with him in one particular, and that was in regard to the impression made on his mind by the arguments of his Right Honourable Friend near him, and by those stated by another Right Honourable Friend, the Speaker. Instead of conveying to him any other sentiments than those of satisfaction, they were in the highest degree satisfactory; because they convinced him that the subject was at last brought to a very near approach to a final and fortunate conclusion. No man would hereafter pretend to argue, that the abolition of the slave trade ought not to take place, however, from motives of an interested or private nature, he might wish to defer the day of its abolition. That important and real calamity, that curse of the nation, was now so well understood, and the dis-

grace

grace of it so perfectly felt, that he might safely consider that its sentence was sealed, and its doom determined. The sense of the people was so clear, that no doubt could be entertained on the subject; and they had the comfort of knowing, that the horrible traffic of selling man to man must be annihilated.

Mr. Pitt then proceeded to argue the whole of the question in the view in which he had ever considered the subject. A great part of his speech he dedicated to proving, from figures, that the population of the negroes in our West India Islands was increasing; that nothing had been found from experience, to operate so effectually to check that increase, as the importation of more African slaves; that the increase was already received at that proportion, which promised an immediate sufficiency, adequate to all the necessary purposes of cultivation and agriculture. After very amply stating this, he went into a detail of the catalogue of calamities entailed on the wretched Africans on their very coasts; he shewed that the inevitable consequence of the slave trade was internal wars, rapine and murder; that the slave trade barred the possibility of civilization, and rendered the very idea of illuminating the minds of the miserable Africans, and giving them notions of morality, religion, and virtue, utterly impracticable. He read a quotation from Rapin, to prove that the practice of selling our fellow-creatures for slaves had once prevailed in this island, and that in the time of Pope Gregory, a number of fine British youths were seen upon sale for slaves in the public market place at Rome. Mr. Pitt commented on this fact with infinite force and ingenuity, making use of it as a most powerful appeal to the heart of every Briton, whether after so striking a proof of the happy change that had taken place in this country, which had made us the seat of arts, the center of commerce, the happiest and the freest nation on the habitable globe, enjoying liberty, governed and secured by law, and living under a constitution the envy of surrounding nations, and the constant object of their imitation, we had a right to say that Africa might not emerge from the state of barbarism and ignorance in which she was at present involved, if we were to put an end to a practice, which not only disgraced ourselves to a degree beyond all powers of description, but put it out of the power of the Africans to become an enlightened people, as long as that infernal practice was continued.

If the trade was to be abolished at all, there was no reason why it should not take place immediately. The injuries we had done were great; and our atonement should be the more speedy. An argument against it was, that, if we abandon the trade, it would be taken up by others. But of this we should be very sure, before we adopted any proceedings in it. We were unquestionably

the

the greatest aggressors, and should not be the last to shew our repentance of the injury. It was certainly our duty to make the experiment. There was nothing in the soil, the climate, or the manner of the Africans, save only the manners for which they were indebted, treachery and artifice, which distinguished them particularly from other remote nations to which our navigators had made their way; yet such were the propensities which we taught and promoted in them, that the oldest of our discoveries remained the most barbarous, by which we were shut out from all intercourse with the interior parts of fair and fruitful colonies, whose trade may enrich us, while we continued a base and bloody intercourse with the natives of the coast. Instead of this wretched and dishonourable system, let us give these Negroes the means of gradually ascending into civilization, of embracing a mild and benevolent religion, of cultivating the useful and ornamental arts; and perhaps we ourselves may live to see the evening of their day gilded with the brightest prospects, from the hopes of which they were removed through many revolving centuries.

At length the House divided on Mr. Jenkinson's Question;

Ayes, for the Adjournment 87

Noes - - - - - 234

Majority against the Adjournment 147

The House next divided on the Question that the word "gradually" stand part of the Question;

Ayes - - - - - 193

Noes - - - - - 125

Majority - - - 68

The House divided a third Time on the Question that the amended Question be agreed to;

Ayes - - - - - 230

Noes - - - - - 85

Majority - - - 145

The Question, "That the Abolition of the Slave Trade ought to be gradually abolished," was therefore carried.

Adjourned at Seven o'Clock in the Morning.

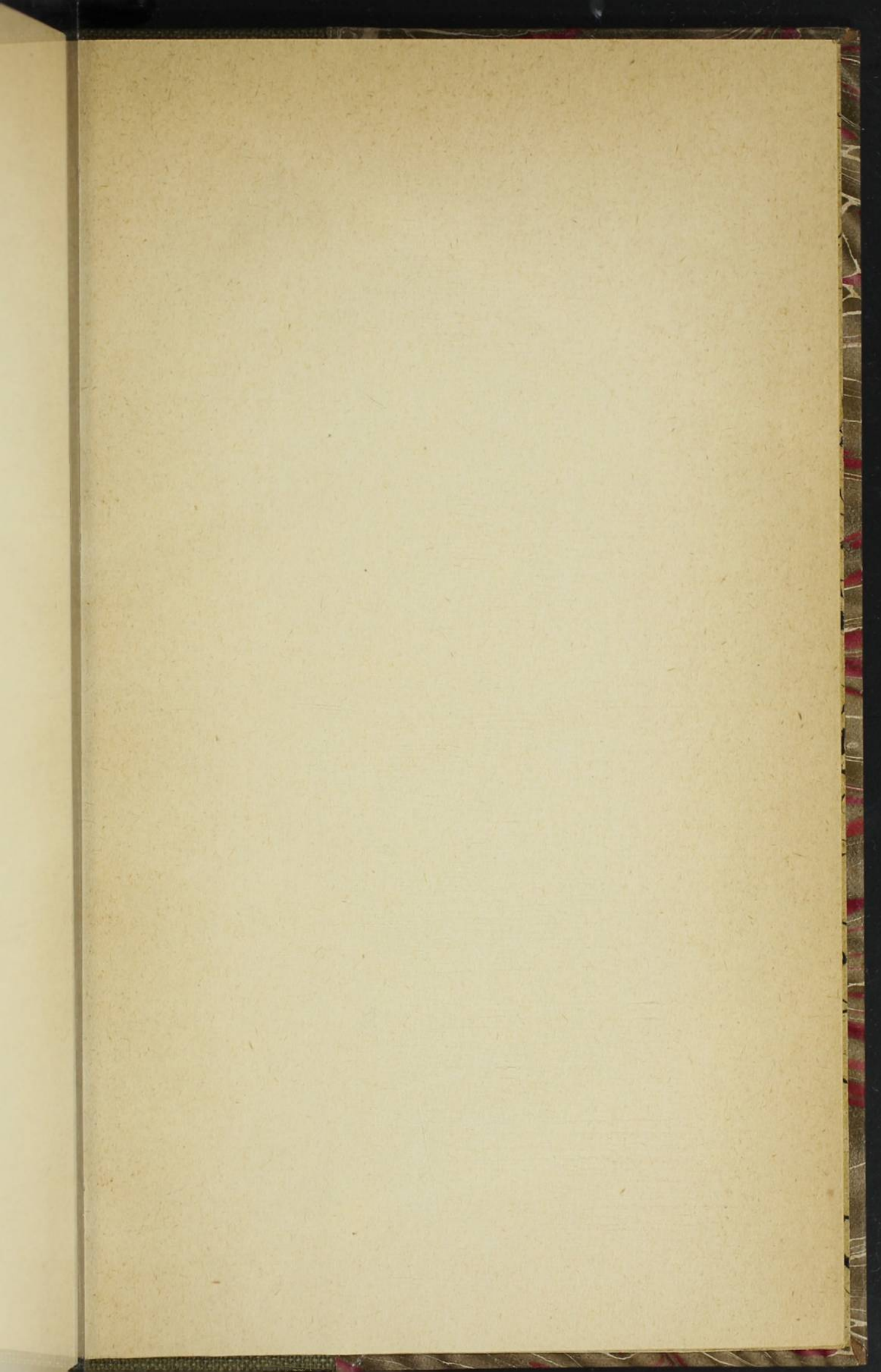
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79
80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96
97
98
99
100

101

102

103

104



010083

