

## PRESENT STATE OF THE SLAVE TRADE.

*From the last Quarterly Review.*

- ART. XI.—1. *Correspondence with the British Commissioners, relating to the Slave Trade.* 1825, 1826. Class A.  
2. *Correspondence with Foreign Powers, relating to the Slave-Trade.* 1825, 1826. Class B. Presented to both Houses of Parliament.  
3. *British and Foreign State Papers.* 1824, 1825.  
4. *Nineteenth and Twentieth Reports of the Directors of the African Institution.* 1825, 1826.

In December, 1824, the senate of South Carolina passed certain resolutions, among which was the following:—

"That this legislature is aware of the dangerous and insidious conduct of a party in Great Britain and the United States, who are ever ready to indulge their benevolent propensities at the expense of their neighbours, and who seem to reflect with complacency on the scenes of carnage and cruelty, which must be the result of their inconsiderate and mischievous machinations."

This is strong language; but perhaps may not be the less true for being so. The resolution shows, at any rate, what are the opinions of a large portion of the free and independent republicans of the United States in regard to negro slavery, and the persons most conspicuous, both in England and in North America, for their exertions to bring its existence to a speedy end. No one will doubt or deny that there does exist a class of persons, such as the resolution designates as 'a party,' (but who may, in England at least, be more properly considered as an organized confederacy of sectarians,)—and it is equally certain that these persons have been, and are, exerting every nerve, *per fas et nefas*, to accomplish an object, which, if accomplished suddenly by any means, or accomplished at all by their mode of proceeding, would unquestionably produce 'scenes of carnage and cruelty.' Every rational being, who knows any thing of the West Indian colonies, and will bring himself to reflect coolly and dispassionately on the relative situation and condition of the whites and the blacks,—the masters and the slaves,—must be aware of this: he must also be convinced that, if once a general insurrection be stirred up—and nothing is more likely to produce it than those 'inconsiderate and mischievous machinations' of which the legislature of South Carolina speaks; a general and indiscriminate massacre would be the result among the varied population of our sugar islands; that a total destruction of all property would be inevitable; and, in a word, that these valuable possessions of the British empire would be utterly lost and annihilated. Nor would his view of the matter be altered in favour of the ultra-abolitionists, by the additional observation that, in point of fact, other nations, in utter contempt and violation of solemn treaties, are systematically taking advantage of the effects of English legislation upon the English colonies; that, in short, foreigners are zealously engaged in increasing the slave population of their own colonies, with the obvious design of enabling these to raise in greater abundance the articles of produce for the consumption of the European world, which were almost exclusively in the hands of our British planters.

To the assertion that the conduct of the party in question is 'dangerous,' we cannot for a moment hesitate to give our assent; whether their object be 'insidious' (by which we suppose is meant, treacherous, or mischievously artful) is best known to themselves. We cannot but think, however, that a candid and impartial foreigner, who should witness the multitude and magnitude of petitions presented to Parliament for the

emancipation of our colonial negroes, might very well be puzzled in his attempt to hit upon the real cause of these expressions of popular feeling; he might be in doubt whether they were the effect of a free constitution, producing in the minds of the people an intense love of liberty, and a burning detestation of the very name of slavery; or merely of human compassion for the supposed sufferings of eight hundred thousand fellow-creatures. In the first case he would conclude, that it was perfectly natural for such a people as the English to be anxious to wipe off the stain with which the existence of slavery, in one portion of the empire, taints the national honour and character; and learn without surprise that petitions were pouring in from every city, town and village of the British Isles, some praying for an immediate, others for a gradual, but all of them for a total abolition of negro slavery, even although it were distinctly assumed; (which we are very sorry to say it has not been); in every such document, that such an event *could only be brought about by a great national and individual sacrifice.* And, unquestionably by such noble and generous conduct adopted under such sane and rational views of the whole case, the people of England would extort his applause, nay, they might well excite his envy.

If, on the other hand, this foreigner should be inclined to ascribe the extraordinary eagerness in question solely to the dictates of humanity, and a feeling of compassion for the unhappy state of the West India negroes; he might perhaps be apt to pause when, on looking around here at home, he saw so many objects of wretchedness and want, such a mass of ignorance, and crime, and cruelty exhibited before his eyes, and detailed with disgusting minuteness in all the daily newspapers, for the relief or reformation of which no particular anxiety appeared to be felt by the 'party' alluded to, or by any other equally active and organized association.

A third view, however, may be supposed, which, if explained to our stranger, might better reconcile to his judgment, than either of the other two, this general impulse and impatience for breaking the fetters of the negro. He might be told, and perhaps truly, that great pains had indeed been taken, on the one hand, by the kind of people described in the South Carolina resolution, and, on the other, by quite a different class of persons, to excite and keep alive these kindly feelings in the people of England in favour of the slave population; but that the main object of the former party was so raise themselves into a spurious kind of reputation and importance, and the self object of the other, a mere mercantile speculation, grounded on the idea that the ruin of our western colonies would promote their personal interests in the east. This foreigner might be told that to effects these objects, the most unfair and unjustifiable means have been resorted to; such as that of calling public meetings in the metropolis and most of the great towns, at which inflammatory speeches are made, loaded with tales of oppression and cruelty, many of them absolutely false, others most grossly exaggerated;—He might be told that pamphlets of the same stamp had been got up and distributed gratis over the whole country, illustrated with pictures of negroes in the act of being whipped, or fettered in chains, for the clearer understanding of those whose learning extend not beyond hieroglyphics or picture-language; & that petitions, ready manufactured in London, had been in thousands sent down to the provinces, to be subscribed by all quakers, methodists, and other dissenters of every denomination; including all that numerous sect who have a fancy for using the cross as their signature, and other really well-mean-

ing and humane persons, who, on too many occasions, are the easy dupes of the artful and designing.

Whether charges of the nature we have mentioned be true or false we shall not take upon ourselves to affirm; it is certain that such have been made, and equally so that they have met with nothing like a satisfactory disproof, or even a solemn contradiction. Of one thing, however, we are very sure, namely, that very false impressions have been made on the public mind as to the real condition of the negro slave in the British colonies; and that, if humanity be their object, the intemperate and misguided proceedings of our ultra abolitionists are much better calculated to injure than to meliorate the fortunes of the African race. Leaving entirely out of the question, for the present, the incalculable evils, moral and political, which would result from any general convulsion in our slave population; and which disappointed hope is but too likely to stir up,—the very expectation, by other nations, (and by the French in particular,) of such a catastrophe, has already given an increased appetite to speculation in the Slave-Trade. In short, it has been and is their hope and expectation to see their own well-stocked colonies rise to prosperity on the ruins of ours. Our ultra abolitionists, indeed, argue that the only security for the abolition of the slave-trade is to be looked for in the extinction of slavery itself; and their position would, no question, be undeniable, on the supposition that the extinction of slavery was to be universal and total. But we are sorry to be obliged to say, that the absolute abolition of the slave trade by England alone, and even the steps hitherto taken by England with the view of ultimately abolishing the condition of slavery, have, in fact, had, as yet more evil effects than good on the fate of the African race at large. This country has, in truth, offered a premium to other nations to engage more actively in the trade, while we are firmly persuaded that, if once the slave-traffic could be put an end to, the mitigation and ultimate extinction of slavery would follow in all the colonial possessions of every nation, by an operation at once gradual, safe, and certain; nay, that there is no other means from which any such results can be rationally expected.

But how, it may be asked, is this to be effected? Those powers with whom we have made solemn treaties for the extinction of this trade, if they do not directly encourage their subjects to violate those engagements, take no active steps whatever to prevent them from doing so; others refuse absolutely to join in any such treaties; in short, to say the least of it, all of them are lukewarm in the matter. They all, in fact, pretend to regard our interference as a political measure, founded upon self-interest; although it would be difficult indeed to produce even a shadow of argument for the support of such a charge. Our abolition of the slave-trade was a measure carried through Parliament with the greatest good faith; it was a measure dictated by the purest principles of humanity; though, it must be confessed, the result has not corresponded with those sanguine views which were taken at the time.

It would not be difficult to prove, that the transfer of the trade from England to other nations has been productive of more human misery in one single year, than the sum-total of what has occurred in our West Indian colonies from the date of the abolition to the present hour; while we may safely affirm, that not one slave the less has crossed the Atlantic, since our abandonment of the traffic, than would have done so if we had continued it to this moment. And to say truth, our own government was in some degree to blame for this unfortunate result, by

the hasty manner in which, after so many years of discussion, the abolition was at last carried. We took that step absolutely without any concert whatever with foreign powers, although there had indeed been a previous resolution in Parliament for an address to his Majesty, that he would be pleased to direct a communication to be made to the other governments of Europe, for the purpose of engaging them to join in the abolition. Indeed it would almost seem, from the precipitate manner of proceeding, that the administration under which the abolition was carried, had anticipated its own speedy abolition. So anxious were the new fangled and unsteady ministers to get the measure through, that they would listen to no proposal that implied delay. In vain the Lords Eldon and Hawksbury urged the expediency of acting in concert with those powers who were then actually engaged in the trade; in vain was the cabinet forewarned, by Lord St. Vincent, of consequences now too visible; that France, on the restoration of peace, would get complete possession of this traffic; that the humane regulations by which the trade in our hands had been, to a considerable extent, governed, would be totally disregarded by those into whose hands it would fall; and that the misery of the middle passage itself would be eventually aggravated in a tenfold degree by the rush and isolated humanity of this country.

It is a matter of equal regret that, in the treaty with France of the 30th May, 1814, by which her West Indian Islands were given back to that power, it had not been made a condition of the restoration of those colonies, that the slave-trade should immediately, and forever, cease on the part of France, and a guarantee extracted for the due execution of such a stipulation; instead of which, under a mistaken liberality, our negotiators were satisfied with an additional article to the treaty, by which

"His Most Christian Majesty engages to unite all his efforts to induce all the powers of Christendom to decree the abolition of the slave-trade, so that the said trade shall cease universally, as it shall cease definitively, under any circumstances, on the part of the French government, in the course of five years."

His Most Christian Majesty, however, in another supplementary article to the Treaty of Paris, of 20th Nov. 1815, again engages "to concert, without loss of time, the most effectual measures for the entire and definitive abolition of a commerce so odious, and so strongly condemned by the laws of religion and nature;"

a commerce which he had indeed before stigmatized as "repugnant to the principles of natural justice, and of the enlightened age in which we live."

(To be Continued.)

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