THOMAS CLARKSON

THE HISTORY OF THE ABOLITION OF THE AFRICAN SLAVE-TRADE

VOLUMES 1 & 2

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VOLUME 1

CHAPTER I.

No subject more pleasing than that of the removal of evils —Evils have existed almost from the beginning of the world —but there is a power in our nature to counteract them— this power increased by Christianity—of the evils removed by Christianity one of the greatest is the Slave-trade—The joy we ought to feel on its abolition from a contemplation of the nature of it—and of the extent of it—and of the difficulty of subduing it—Usefulness also of the contemplation of this subject.

I scarcely know of any subject, the contemplation of which, is more pleasing than that of the correction or of the removal of any of the acknowledged evils of life; for while we rejoice to think that the sufferings of our fellow-creatures have been thus, in any instance, relieved, we must rejoice equally to think that our own moral condition must have been necessarily improved by the change.

That evils, both physical and moral, have existed long upon earth there can be no doubt. One of the sacred writers, to whom we more immediately appeal for the early history of mankind, informs us that the state of our first parents was a state of innocence and happiness; but that, soon after their creation, sin and misery entered into the world. The Poets in their fables, most of which, however extravagant they may seem, had their origin in truth, speak the same language. Some of these represent the first condition of man by the figure of the golden, and his subsequent degeneracy and subjection to suffering by that

of the silver, and afterwards of the iron, age. Others tell us that the first female was made of clay; that she was called Pandora, because every necessary gift, qualification, or endowment, was given to her by the Gods, but that she received from Jupiter at the same time, a box, from which, when opened, a multitude of disorders sprung, and that these spread themselves immediately afterwards among all of the human race. Thus it appears, whatever authorities we consult, that those which may be termed the evils of life existed in the earliest times. And what does subsequent history, combined with our own experience, tell us, but that these have been continued, or that they have come down, in different degrees, through successive generations of men, in all the known countries of the universe, to the present day?

But though the inequality visible in the different conditions of life, and the passions interwoven into our nature, (both which have been allotted to us for wise purposes, and without which we could not easily afford a proof of the existence of that which is denominated virtue,) have a tendency to produce vice and wretchedness among us, yet we see in this our constitution what may operate partially as preventives and correctives of them. If there be a radical propensity in our nature to do that which is wrong, there is on the other hand a counteracting power within it, or an impulse, by means of the action of the Divine Spirit upon our minds, which urges us to do that which is right. If the voice of temptation, clothed in musical and seducing accents, charms us one way, the voice of holiness, speaking to us from within in a solemn and powerful manner, commands us another. Does one man obtain a victory over his corrupt affections? an immediate perception of pleasure, like the feeling of a reward divinely conferred upon him, is noticed.—Does another fall prostrate beneath their power? a painful feeling, and such as pronounces to him the sentence of reproof and punishment, is found to follow.—If one, by suffering his

heart to become hardened, oppresses a fellow-creature, the tear of sympathy starts up in the eye of another, and the latter instantly feels a desire, involuntarily generated, of flying to his relief. Thus impulses, feelings, and dispositions have been implanted in our nature for the purpose of preventing and rectifying the evils of life. And as these have operated so as to stimulate some men to lessen them by the exercise of an amiable charity, so they have operated to stimulate others, in various other ways, to the same end. Hence the philosopher has left moral precepts behind him in favour of benevolence, and the legislator has endeavoured to prevent barbarous practices by the introduction of laws.

In consequence then of these impulses and feelings, by which the pure power in our nature is thus made to act as a check upon the evil part of it, and in consequence of the influence which philosophy and legislative wisdom have had in their respective provinces, there has been always, in all times and countries, a counteracting energy, which has opposed itself more or less to the crimes and miseries of mankind. But it seems to have been reserved for Christianity to increase this energy, and to give it the widest possible domain. It was reserved for her, under the same Divine Influence, to give the best views of the nature, and of the present and future condition of man; to afford the best moral precepts, to communicate the most benign stimulus to the heart, to produce the most blameless conduct, and thus to cut off many of the causes of wretchedness, and to heal it wherever it was found. At her command, wherever she has been duly acknowledged, many of the evils of life have already fled. The prisoner of war is no longer led into the amphitheatre to become a gladiator, and to imbrue his hands in the blood of his fellow-captive for the sport of a thoughtless multitude. The stern priest, cruel through fanaticism and custom, no longer leads his fellow-creature to the altar, to sacrifice him to fictitious Gods. The venerable martyr, courageous

through faith and the sanctity of his life, is no longer hurried to the flames. The haggard witch, poring over her incantations by moon-light, no longer scatters her superstitious poison among her miserable neighbours, nor suffers for her crime.

But in whatever way Christianity may have operated towards the increase of this energy, or towards a diminution of human misery, it has operated in none more powerfully than by the new views, and consequent duties, which it introduced on the subject of charity, or practical benevolence and love. Men in ancient times looked upon their talents, of whatever description, as their own, which they might use or cease to use at their discretion. But the author of our religion was the first who taught that, however in a legal point of view the talent of individuals might belong exclusively to themselves, so that no other person had a right to demand the use of it by force, yet in the Christian dispensation they were but the stewards of it for good; that so much was expected from this stewardship, that it was difficult for those who were entrusted with it to enter into his spiritual kingdom; that these had no right to conceal their talent in a napkin; but that they were bound to dispense a portion of it to the relief of their fellow-creatures; and that in proportion to the magnitude of it they were accountable for the extensiveness of its use. He was the first, who pronounced the misapplication of it to be a crime, and to be a crime of no ordinary dimension. He was the first who broke down the boundary between Jew and Gentile, and therefore the first, who pointed out to men the inhabitants of other countries for the exercise of their philanthropy and love. Hence a distinction is to be made both in the principle and practice of charity, as existing in ancient or in modern times. Though the old philosophers, historians, and poets, frequently inculcated benevolence, we have no reason to conclude from any facts they have left us, that persons in their days did any thing more than occasionally relieve an unfortunate object, who might

present himself before them, or that, however they might deplore the existence of public evils among them, they joined in associations for their suppression, or that they carried their charity, as bodies of men, into other kingdoms. To Christianity alone we are indebted for the new and sublime spectacle of seeing men going beyond the bounds of individual usefulness to each other—of seeing them associate for the extirpation of private and public misery—and of seeing them carry their charity, as a united brotherhood, into distant lands. And in this wider field of benevolence it would be unjust not to confess, that no country has shone with more true lustre than our own, there being scarcely any case of acknowledged affliction for which some of her Christian children have not united in an attempt to provide relief.

Among the evils, corrected or subdued, either by the general influence of Christianity on the minds of men, or by particular associations of Christians, the African[A] Slave-trade appears to me to have occupied the foremost place. The abolition of it, therefore, of which it has devolved upon me to write the history, should be accounted as one of the greatest blessings, and, as such, should be one of the most copious sources of our joy. Indeed I know of no evil, the removal of which should excite in us a higher degree of pleasure. For in considerations of this kind, are we not usually influenced by circumstances? Are not our feelings usually affected according to the situation, or the magnitude, or the importance of these? Are they not more or less elevated as the evil under our contemplation has been more or less productive of misery, or more or less productive of guilt? Are they not more or less elevated, again, as we have found it more or less considerable in extent? Our sensations will undoubtedly be in proportion to such circumstances, or our joy to the appretiation or mensuration of the evil which has been removed.

[Footnote A: Slavery had been before annihilated by Christianity, I mean in the West of Europe, at the close of

the twelfth century.]

To value the blessing of the abolition as we ought, or to appretiate the joy and gratitude which we ought to feel concerning it, we must enter a little into the circumstances of the trade. Our statement, however, of these needs not be long. A few pages will do all that is necessary! A glance only into such a subject as this will be sufficient to affect the heart—to arouse our indignation and our pity,—and to teach us the importance of the victory obtained.

The first subject for consideration, towards enabling us to make the estimate in question, will be that of the nature of the evil belonging to the Slave-trade. This may be seen by examining it in three points of view:—First, As it has been proved to arise on the continent of Africa in the course of reducing the inhabitants of it to slavery;—Secondly, in the course of conveying them from thence to the lands or colonies of other nations;—And Thirdly, In continuing them there as slaves.

To see it as it has been shown to arise in the first case, let us suppose ourselves on the Continent just mentioned. Well then—We are landed—We are already upon our travels—We have just passed through one forest—We are now come to a more open place, which indicates an approach to habitation. And what object is that, which first obtrudes itself upon our sight? Who is that wretched woman, whom we discover under that noble tree, wringing her hands, and beating her breast, as if in the agonies of despair? Three days has she been there at intervals to look and to watch, and this is the fourth morning, and no tidings of her children yet. Beneath its spreading boughs they were accustomed to play—But alas! the savage man-stealer interrupted their playful mirth, and has taken them for ever from her sight.

But let us leave the cries of this unfortunate woman, and hasten into another district:—And what do we first see here? Who is he, that just now started across the narrow pathway, as if afraid of a human face? What is that sudden

rustling among the leaves? Why are those persons flying from our approach, and hiding themselves in yon darkest thicket? Behold, as we get into the plain, a deserted village! The rice-field has been just trodden down around it. An aged man, venerable by his silver beard, lies wounded and dying near the threshold of his hut. War, suddenly instigated by avarice, has just visited the dwellings which we see. The old have been butchered, because unfit for slavery, and the young have been carried off, except such as have fallen in the conflict, or have escaped among the woods behind us.

But let us hasten from this cruel scene, which gives rise to so many melancholy reflections. Let us cross yon distant river, and enter into some new domain. But are we relieved even here from afflicting spectacles? Look at that immense crowd, which appears to be gathered in a ring. See the accused innocent in the middle. The ordeal of poisonous water has been administered to him, as a test of his innocence or his guilt. He begins to be sick, and pale. Alas! yon mournful shriek of his relatives confirms that the loss of his freedom is now sealed.

And whither shall we go now? The night is approaching fast. Let us find some friendly hut, where sleep may make us forget for a while the sorrows of the day. Behold a hospitable native ready to receive us at his door! Let us avail ourselves of his kindness. And now let us give ourselves to repose. But why, when our eyelids are but just closed, do we find ourselves thus suddenly awakened? What is the meaning of the noise around us, of the trampling of people's feet, of the rustling of the bow, the quiver, and the lance? Let us rise up and inquire. Behold! the inhabitants are all alarmed! A wakeful woman has shown them yon distant column of smoke and blaze. The neighbouring village is on fire. The prince, unfaithful to the sacred duty of the protection of his subjects, has surrounded them. He is now burning their habitations, and seizing, as saleable booty, the fugitives from the flames.

Such then are some of the scenes that have been passing in Africa in consequence of the existence of the Slave-trade; or such is the nature of the evil, as it has shown itself in the first of the cases we have noticed. Let us now estimate it as it has been proved to exist in the second; or let us examine the state of the unhappy Africans, reduced to slavery in this manner, while on board the vessels, which are to convey them across the ocean to other lands. And here I must observe at once, that, as far as this part of the evil is concerned, I am at a loss to describe it. Where shall I find words to express properly their sorrow, as arising from the reflection of being parted for ever from their friends, their relatives, and their country? Where shall I find language to paint in appropriate colours the horror of mind brought on by thoughts of their future unknown destination, of which they can augur nothing but misery from all that they have yet seen? How shall I make known their situation, while labouring under painful disease, or while struggling in the suffocating holds of their prisons, like animals inclosed in an exhausted receiver? How shall I describe their feelings, as exposed to all the personal indignities, which lawless appetite or brutal passion may suggest? How shall I exhibit their sufferings as determining to refuse sustenance and die, or as resolving to break their chains, and, disdaining to live as slaves, to punish their oppressors? How shall I give an idea of their agony, when under various punishments and tortures for their reputed crimes? Indeed every part of this subject defies my powers, and I must therefore satisfy myself and the reader with a general representation, or in the words of a celebrated member of Parliament, that "Never was so much human suffering condensed in so small a space."

I come now to the evil, as it has been proved to arise in the third case; or to consider the situation of the unhappy victims of the trade, when their painful voyages are over, or after they have been landed upon their destined shores. And here we are to view them first under the degrading

light of cattle. We are to see them examined, handled, selected, separated, and sold. Alas! relatives are separated from relatives, as if, like cattle, they had no rational intellect, no power of feeling the nearness of relationship, nor sense of the duties belonging to the ties of life! We are next to see them labouring, and this for the benefit of those, to whom they are under no obligation, by any law either natural or divine, to obey. We are to see them, if refusing the commands of their purchasers, however weary, or feeble, or indisposed, subject to corporal punishments, and, if forcibly resisting them, to death. We are to see them in a state of general degradation and misery. The knowledge, which their oppressors have of their own crime in having violated the rights of nature, and of the disposition of the injured to seek all opportunities of revenge, produces a fear, which dictates to them the necessity of a system of treatment by which they shall keep up a wide distinction between the two, and by which the noble feelings of the latter shall be kept down, and their spirits broken. We are to see them again subject to individual persecution, as anger, or malice, or any bad passion may suggest. Hence the whip—the chain—the iron-collar. Hence the various modes of private torture, of which so many accounts have been truly given. Nor can such horrible cruelties be discovered so as to be made punishable, while the testimony of any number of the oppressed is invalid against the oppressors, however they may be offences against the laws. And, lastly, we are to see their innocent offspring, against whose personal liberty the shadow of an argument cannot be advanced, inheriting all the miseries of their parents' lot.

The evil then, as far as it has been hitherto viewed, presents to us in its three several departments a measure of human suffering not to be equalled—not to be calculated—not to be described. But would that we could consider this part of the subject as dismissed! Would that in each of the departments now examined there was no counterpart

left us to contemplate! But this cannot be. For if there be persons, who suffer unjustly, there must be others, who oppress. And if there be those who oppress, there must be to the suffering, which has been occasioned, a corresponding portion of immorality or guilt.

We are obliged then to view the counterpart of the evil in question, before we can make a proper estimate of the nature of it. And, in examining this part of it, we shall find that we have a no less frightful picture to behold than in the former cases; or that, while the miseries endured by the unfortunate Africans excite our pity on the one hand, the vices, which are connected with them, provoke our indignation and abhorrence on the other. The Slave-trade, in this point of view, must strike us as an immense mass of evil on account of the criminality attached to it, as displayed in the various branches of it, which have already been examined. For, to take the counterpart of the evil in the first of these, can we say, that no moral turpitude is to be placed to the account of those, who living on the continent of Africa give birth to the enormities, which take place in consequence of the prosecution of this trade? Is not that man made morally worse, who is induced to become a tiger to his species, or who, instigated by avarice, lies in wait in the thicket to get possession of his fellow-man? Is no injustice manifest in the land, where the prince, unfaithful to his duty, seizes his innocent subjects, and sells them for slaves? Are no moral evils produced among those communities, which make war upon other communities for the sake of plunder, and without any previous provocation or offence? Does no crime attach to those, who accuse others falsely, or who multiply and divide crimes for the sake of the profit of the punishment, and who for the same reason, continue the use of barbarous and absurd ordeals as a test of innocence or guilt?

In the second of these branches the counterpart of the evil is to be seen in the conduct of those, who purchase the miserable natives in their own country, and convey them to

distant lands. And here questions, similar to the former, may be asked. Do they experience no corruption of their nature, or become chargeable with no violation of right, who, when they go with their ships to this continent, know the enormities which their visits there will occasion, who buy their fellow-creature man, and this, knowing the way in which he comes into their hands, and who chain, and imprison, and scourge him? Do the moral feelings of those persons escape without injury, whose hearts are hardened? And can the hearts of those be otherwise than hardened, who are familiar with the tears and groans of innocent strangers forcibly torn away from every thing that is dear to them in life, who are accustomed to see them on board their vessels in a state of suffocation and in the agonies of despair, and who are themselves in the habits of the cruel use of arbitrary power?

The counterpart of the evil in its third branch is to be seen in the conduct of those, who, when these miserable people have been landed, purchase and carry them to their respective homes. And let us see whether a mass of wickedness is not generated also in the present case. Can those have nothing to answer for, who separate the faithful ties which nature and religion have created? Can their feelings be otherwise than corrupted, who consider their fellow-creatures as brutes, or treat those as cattle, who may become the temples of the Holy Spirit, and in whom the Divinity disdains not himself to dwell? Is there no injustice in forcing men to labour without wages? Is there no breach of duty, when we are commanded to clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, and visit the sick and in prison, in exposing them to want, in torturing them by cruel punishment, and in grinding them down, by hard labour, so as to shorten their days? Is there no crime in adopting a system, which keeps down all the noble faculties of their souls, and which positively debases and corrupts their nature? Is there no crime in perpetuating these evils among their innocent offspring? And finally, besides all these

crimes, is there not naturally in the familiar sight of the exercise, but more especially in the exercise itself, of uncontrolled power, that which vitiates the internal man? In seeing misery stalk daily over the land, do not all become insensibly hardened? By giving birth to that misery themselves, do they not become abandoned? In what state of society are the corrupt appetites so easily, so quickly, and so frequently indulged, and where else, by means of frequent indulgence, do these experience such a monstrous growth? Where else is the temper subject to such frequent irritation, or passion to such little control? Yes—If the unhappy slave is in an unfortunate situation, so is the tyrant who holds him. Action and reaction are equal to each other, as well in the moral as in the natural world. You cannot exercise an improper dominion over a fellow-creature, but by a wise ordering of Providence you must necessarily injure yourself.

Having now considered the nature of the evil of the Slave-trade in its three separate departments of suffering, and in its corresponding counterparts of guilt, I shall make a few observations on the extent of it.

On this subject it must strike us, that the misery and the crimes included in the evil, as it has been found in Africa, were not like common maladies, which make a short or periodical visit and then are gone, but that they were continued daily. Nor were they like diseases, which from local causes attack a village or a town, and by the skill of the physician, under the blessing of Providence, are removed, but they affected a whole continent. The trade with all its horrors began at the river Senegal, and continued, winding with the coast, through its several geographical divisions to Cape Negro; a distance of more than three thousand miles. In various lines or paths formed at right angles from the shore, and passing into the heart of the country, slaves were procured and brought down. The distance, which many of them travelled, was immense. Those, who have been in Africa, have assured us, that they

came as far as from the sources of their largest rivers, which we know to be many hundred miles in-land, and the natives have told us, in their way of computation, that they came a journey of many moons.

It must strike us again, that the misery and the crimes, included in the evil, as it has been shown in the transportation, had no ordinary bounds. They were not to be seen in the crossing of a river, but of an ocean. They did not begin in the morning and end at night, but were continued for many weeks, and sometimes by casualties for a quarter of the year. They were not limited to the precincts of a solitary ship, but were spread among many vessels; and these were so constantly passing, that the ocean itself never ceased to be a witness of their existence.

And it must strike us finally, that the misery and crimes, included in the evil as it has been found in foreign lands, were not confined within the shores of a little island. Most of the islands of a continent, and many of these of considerable population and extent, were filled with them. And the continent itself, to which these geographically belong, was widely polluted by their domain. Hence, if we were to take the vast extent of space occupied by these crimes and sufferings from the heart of Africa to its shores, and that which they filled on the continent of America and the islands adjacent, and were to join the crimes and sufferings in one to those in the other by the crimes and sufferings which took place in the track of the vessels successively crossing the Atlantic, we should behold a vast belt as it were of physical and moral evil, reaching through land and ocean to the length of nearly half the circle of the globe.

The next view, which I shall take of this evil, will be as it relates to the difficulty of subduing it.

This difficulty may be supposed to have been more than ordinarily great. Many evils of a public nature, which existed in former times, were the offspring of ignorance and superstition, and they were subdued of course by the

progress of light and knowledge. But the evil in question began in avarice. It was nursed also by worldly interest. It did not therefore so easily yield to the usual correctives of disorders in the world. We may observe also, that the interest by which it was thus supported, was not that of a few individuals, nor of one body, but of many bodies of men. It was interwoven again into the system of the commerce and of the revenue of nations. Hence the merchant—the planter—the mortgagee—the manufacturer—the politician—the legislator—the cabinet-minister—lifted up their voices against the annihilation of it. For these reasons the Slave-trade may be considered, like the fabulous hydra, to have had a hundred heads, every one of which it was necessary to cut off before it could be subdued. And as none but Hercules was fitted to conquer the one, so nothing less than extraordinary prudence, courage, labour, and patience, could overcome the other. To protection in this manner by his hundred interests it was owing, that the monster stalked in security for so long a time. He stalked too in the open day, committing his mighty depredations. And when good men, whose duty it was to mark him as the object of their destruction, began to assail him, he did not fly, but gnashed his teeth at them, growling savagely at the same time, and putting himself into a posture of defiance.

We see then, in whatever light we consider the Slave-trade, whether we examine into the nature of it, or whether we look into the extent of it, or whether we estimate the difficulty of subduing it, we must conclude that no evil more monstrous has ever existed upon earth. But if so, then we have proved the truth of the position, that the abolition of it ought to be accounted by us as one of the greatest blessings, and that it ought to be one of the most copious sources of our joy. Indeed I do not know, how we can sufficiently express what we ought to feel upon this occasion. It becomes us as individuals to rejoice. It becomes us as a nation to rejoice. It becomes us even to perpetuate our joy to our posterity. I do not mean however

by anniversaries, which are to be celebrated by the ringing of bells and convivial meetings, but by handing down this great event so impressively to our children, as to raise in them, if not continual, yet frequently renewed thanksgivings, to the great Creator of the universe, for the manifestation of this his favour, in having disposed our legislators to take away such a portion of suffering from our fellow-creatures, and such a load of guilt from our native land.

And as the contemplation of the removal of this monstrous evil should excite in us the most pleasing and grateful sensations, so the perusal of the history of it should afford us lessons, which it must be useful to us to know or to be reminded of. For it cannot be otherwise than useful to us to know the means which have been used, and the different persons who have moved, in so great a cause. It cannot be otherwise than useful to us to be impressively reminded of the simple axiom, which the perusal of this history will particularly suggest to us, that "the greatest works must have a beginning;" because the fostering of such an idea in our minds cannot but encourage us to undertake the removal of evils, however vast they may appear in their size, or however difficult to overcome. It cannot again be otherwise than useful to us to be assured (and this history will assure us of it) that in any work, which is a work of righteousness, however small the beginning may be, or however small the progress may be that we may make in it, we ought never to despair; for that, whatever checks and discouragements we may meet with, "no virtuous effort is ever ultimately lost." And finally, it cannot be otherwise than useful to us to form the opinion, which the contemplation of this subject must always produce, namely, that many of the evils, which are still left among us, may, by an union of wise and virtuous individuals, be greatly alleviated, if not entirely done away: for if the great evil of the Slave-trade, so deeply entrenched by its hundred interests, has fallen prostrate before the

efforts of those who attacked it, what evil of a less magnitude shall not be more easily subdued? O may reflections of this sort always enliven us, always encourage us, always stimulate us to our duty! May we never cease to believe, that many of the miseries of life are still to be remedied, or to rejoice that we may be permitted, if we will only make ourselves worthy by our endeavours, to heal them! May we encourage for this purpose every generous sympathy that arises in our hearts, as the offspring of the Divine influence for our good, convinced that we are not born for ourselves alone, and that the Divinity never so fully dwells in us, as when we do his will; and that we never do his will more agreeably, as far as it has been revealed to us, than when we employ our time in works of charity towards the rest of our fellow-creatures!

CHAPTER II.

As it is desirable to know the true sources of events in history, so this will be realized in that of the abolition of the Slave-trade—Inquiry as to those who favoured the cause of the Africans previously to the year 1787—All these to be considered as necessary forerunners in that cause—First forerunners were Cardinal Ximenes—the Emperor Charles the Fifth—Pope Leo the Tenth—Elizabeth queen of England —Louis the Thirteenth of France.

It would be considered by many, who have stood at the mouth of a river, and witnessed its torrent there, to be both an interesting and a pleasing journey to go to the fountain-head, and then to travel on its banks downwards, and to mark the different streams in each side, which should run into it and feed it. So I presume the reader will not be a little interested and entertained in viewing with me the course of the abolition of the Slave-trade, in first finding its source, and then in tracing the different springs which have contributed to its increase. And here I may observe that, in doing this, we shall have advantages, which historians have not always had in developing the causes of things. Many have handed down to us events, for the production of which they have given us but their own conjectures. There has been often indeed such a distance between the events themselves and the lives of those who have recorded them, that the different means and motives belonging to them have been lost through time. On the present occasion, however, we shall have the peculiar satisfaction of knowing that we communicate the truth, or that those, which we unfold, are the true causes and means. For the most remote of all the human springs, which can be traced as having any bearing upon the great event in question, will fall within

the period of three centuries, and the most powerful of them within the last twenty years. These circumstances indeed have had their share in inducing me to engage in the present history. Had I measured it by the importance of the subject, I had been deterred: but believing that most readers love the truth, and that it ought to be the object of all writers to promote it, and believing moreover, that I was in possession of more facts on this subject than any other person, I thought I was peculiarly called upon to undertake it.

In tracing the different streams from whence the torrent arose, which has now happily swept away the Slave-trade, I must begin with an inquiry as to those who favoured the cause of the injured Africans from the year 1516 to the year 1787, at which latter period a number of persons associated themselves in England for its abolition. For though they, who belonged to this association, may, in consequence of having pursued a regular system, be called the principal actors, yet it must be acknowledged that their efforts would never have been so effectual, if the minds of men had not been prepared by others, who had moved before them. Great events have never taken place without previously disposing causes. So it is in the case before us. Hence they, who lived even in early times, and favoured this great cause, may be said to have been necessary precursors in it. And here it may be proper to observe, that it is by no means necessary that all these should have been themselves actors in the production of this great event. Persons have contributed towards it in different ways:— Some have written expressly on the subject, who have had no opportunity of promoting it by personal exertions. Others have only mentioned it incidentally in their writings. Others, in an elevated rank and station, have cried out publicly concerning it, whose sayings have been recorded. All these, however, may be considered as necessary forerunners in their day. For all of them have brought the subject more or less into notice. They have more or less

enlightened the mind upon it. They have more or less impressed it. And therefore each may be said to have had his share in diffusing and keeping up a certain portion of knowledge, and feeling concerning it, which has been eminently useful in the promotion of the cause.

It is rather remarkable, that the first forerunners and coadjutors should have been men in power.

So early as in the year 1503 a few slaves had been sent from the Portuguese settlements in Africa into the Spanish colonies in America. In 1511, Ferdinand the Fifth, king of Spain, permitted them to be carried in greater numbers. Ferdinand, however, must have been ignorant in these early times of the piratical manner in which the Portuguese had procured them. He could have known nothing of their treatment when in bondage, nor could he have viewed the few uncertain adventurous transportations of them into his dominions in the western world, in the light of a regular trade. After his death, however, a proposal was made by Bartholomew de las Casas, the bishop of Chiapa, to Cardinal Ximenes, who held the reins of the government of Spain till Charles the Fifth came to the throne, for the establishment of a regular system of commerce in the persons of the native Africans. The object of Bartholomew de las Casas was undoubtedly to save the American Indians, whose cruel treatment and almost extirpation he had witnessed during his residence among them, and in whose behalf he had undertaken a voyage to the court of Spain. It is difficult to reconcile this proposal with the humane and charitable spirit of the bishop of Chiapa. But it is probable he believed that a code of laws would soon be established in favour both of Africans and of the natives in the Spanish settlements, and that he flattered himself that, being about to return and to live in the country of their slavery, he could look to the execution of it. The cardinal, however, with a foresight, a benevolence, and a justice, which will always do honour to his memory, refused the proposal, not only judging it to be unlawful to consign

innocent people to slavery at all, but to be very inconsistent to deliver the inhabitants of one country from a state of misery by consigning to it those of another. Ximenes therefore may be considered as one of the first great friends of the Africans after the partial beginning of the trade.

This answer of the cardinal, as it showed his virtue as an individual, so it was peculiarly honourable to him as a public man, and ought to operate as a lesson to other statesmen, how they admit any thing new among political regulations and establishments, which is connected in the smallest degree with injustice. For evil, when once sanctioned by governments, spreads in a tenfold degree, and may, unless seasonably checked, become so ramified, as to affect the reputation of a country, and to render its own removal scarcely possible without detriment to the political concerns of the state. In no instance has this been verified more than in the case of the Slave-trade. Never was our national character more tarnished, and our prosperity more clouded by guilt. Never was there a monster more difficult to subdue. Even they, who heard as it were the shrieks of oppression, and wished to assist the sufferers, were fearful of joining in their behalf. While they acknowledged the necessity of removing one evil, they were terrified by the prospect of introducing another; and were therefore only able to relieve their feelings, by lamenting in the bitterness of their hearts, that this traffic had ever been begun at all.

After the death of cardinal Ximenes, the emperor Charles the Fifth, who had come into power, encouraged the Slave-trade. In 1517 he granted a patent to one of his Flemish favourites, containing an exclusive right of importing four thousand Africans into America. But he lived long enough to repent of what he had thus inconsiderately done. For in the year 1542 he made a code of laws for the better protection of the unfortunate Indians in his foreign dominions; and he stopped the progress of African slavery

by an order, that all slaves in his American islands should be made free. This order was executed by Pedro de la Gasca. Manumission took place as well in Hispaniola as on the Continent. But on the return of Gasca to Spain, and the retirement of Charles into a monastery, slavery was revived.

It is impossible to pass over this instance of the abolition of slavery by Charles in all his foreign dominions, without some comments. It shows him, first, to have been a friend both to the Indians and the Africans, as a part of the human race. It shows he was ignorant of what he was doing when he gave his sanction to this cruel trade. It shows when legislators give one set of men an undue power over another, how quickly they abuse it,—or he never would have found himself obliged in the short space of twenty-five years to undo that which he had countenanced as a great state-measure. And while it confirms the former lesson to statesmen, of watching the beginnings or principles of things in their political movements, it should teach them never to persist in the support of evils, through the false shame of being obliged to confess that they had once given them their sanction, nor to delay the cure of them because, politically speaking, neither this nor that is the proper season; but to do them away instantly, as there can only be one fit or proper time in the eye of religion, namely, on the conviction of their existence.

From the opinions of cardinal Ximenes and of the emperor Charles the Fifth, I hasten to that which was expressed much about the same time, in a public capacity, by pope Leo the Tenth. The Dominicans in Spanish America, witnessing the cruel treatment which the slaves underwent there, considered slavery as utterly repugnant to the principles of the gospel, and recommended the abolition of it. The Franciscans did not favour the former in this their scheme of benevolence; and the consequence was, that a controversy on this subject sprung up between them, which was carried to this pope for his decision. Leo

exerted himself, much to his honour, in behalf of the poor sufferers, and declared "That not only the Christian religion, but that Nature herself cried out against a state of slavery." This answer was certainly worthy of one who was deemed the head of the Christian church. It must, however, be confessed that it would have been strange if Leo, in his situation as pontiff, had made a different reply. He could never have denied that God was no respecter of persons. He must have acknowledged that men were bound to love each other as brethren. And, if he admitted the doctrine, that all men were accountable for their actions hereafter, he could never have prevented the deduction, that it was necessary they should be free. Nor could he, as a man of high attainments, living early in the sixteenth century, have been ignorant of what had taken place in the twelfth; or that, by the latter end of this latter century, Christianity had obtained the undisputed honour of having extirpated slavery from the western part of the European world.

From Spain and Italy I come to England. The first importation of slaves from Africa by our countrymen was in the reign of Elizabeth, in the year 1562. This great princess seems on the very commencement of the trade to have questioned its lawfulness. She seems to have entertained a religious scruple concerning it, and, indeed, to have revolted at the very thought of it. She seems to have been aware of the evils to which its continuance might lead, or that, if it were sanctioned, the most unjustifiable means might be made use of to procure the persons of the natives of Africa. And in what light she would have viewed any acts of this kind, had they taken place, we may conjecture from this fact,—that when captain (afterwards Sir John) Hawkins returned from his first voyage to Africa and Hispaniola, whither he had carried slaves, she sent for him, and, as we learn from Hill's Naval History, expressed her concern lest any of the Africans should be carried off without their free consent, declaring that "It would be detestable, and call down the vengeance of Heaven upon the undertakers."

Captain Hawkins promised to comply with the injunctions of Elizabeth in this respect. But he did not keep his word; for when he went to Africa again, he seized many of the inhabitants and carried them off as slaves, which occasioned Hill, in the account he gives of his second voyage, to use these remarkable words:—"Here began the horrid practice of forcing the Africans into slavery, an injustice and barbarity, which, so sure as there is vengeance in heaven for the worst of crimes, will sometime be the destruction of all who allow or encourage it." That the trade should have been suffered to continue under such a princess, and after such solemn expressions as those which she has been described to have uttered, can be only attributed to the pains taken by those concerned in it to keep her ignorant of the truth.

From England I now pass over to France. Labat, a Roman missionary, in his account of the isles of America, mentions, that Louis the Thirteenth was very uneasy when he was about to issue the edict, by which all Africans coming into his colonies were to be made slaves, and that this uneasiness continued, till he was assured, that the introduction of them in this capacity into his foreign dominions was the readiest way of converting them to the principles of the Christian religion.

These, then, were the first forerunners in the great cause of the abolition of the Slave-trade. Nor have their services towards it been of small moment. For, in the first place, they have enabled those, who came after them, and who took an active interest in the same cause, to state the great authority of their opinions and of their example. They have enabled them, again, to detail the history connected with these, in consequence of which circumstances have been laid open, which it is of great importance to know. For have they not enabled them to state, that the African Slave-trade never would have been permitted to exist but for the ignorance of those in authority concerning it—That at its commencement there was a revolting of nature against it—

a suspicion—a caution—a fear—both as to its unlawfulness and its effects? Have they not enabled them to state, that falsehoods were advanced, and these concealed under the mask of religion, to deceive those who had the power to suppress it? Have they not enabled them to state that this trade began in piracy, and that it was continued upon the principles of force? And, finally, have not they, who have been enabled to make these statements, knowing all the circumstances connected with them, found their own zeal increased and their own courage and perseverance strengthened; and have they not, by the communication of them to others, produced many friends and even labourers in the cause?

CHAPTER III.

Forerunners continued to 1787—divided from this time into four classes—First class consists principally of persons in Great Britain of various description—Godwyn—Baxter—Tryon—Southern—Primatt— Montesquieu—Hutcheson—Sharp—Ramsay—and a multitude of others, whose names and services follow.

I have hitherto traced the history of the forerunners in this great cause only up to about the year 1640. If I am to pursue my plan, I am to trace it to the year 1787. But in order to show what I intend in a clearer point of view, I shall divide those who have lived within this period, and who will now consist of persons in a less elevated station, into four classes: and I shall give to each class a distinct consideration by itself.

Several of our old English writers, though they have not mentioned the African Slave-trade, or the slavery consequent upon it, in their respective works, have yet given their testimony of condemnation against both. Thus our great Milton:—

"O execrable son, so to aspire
Above his brethren, to himself assuming
Authority usurpt, from God not given;
He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl,
Dominion absolute; that right we hold
By his donation;—but man over men
He made not lord, such title to himself
Reserving, human left from human free."