

AN APPEAL

ON

THE INIQUITY OF SLAVERY

AND THE

SLAVE-TRADE:

ISSUED BY

The Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends,

HELD IN LONDON, 1844.

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A N A P P E A L, &c.

THE sins of Slavery and of the Slave-trade have long and very seriously claimed the attention of the members of our religious Society. So far back as the year 1761, this meeting condemned the unchristian traffic in Negroes, and enjoined that all who persevered in a conduct so reproachful to Christianity, should be pleaded with, and if they did not desist from it, no longer be considered as members of the Society.

From that period to the present, a testimony has been uniformly borne against these abominations, and we have repeatedly felt it to be a duty publicly to set forth the unrighteousness of such practices: and also, from one time to another, to petition our legislature on behalf of those who are so cruelly treated under this system of oppression and wickedness.

Our hearts are afresh affected with sorrow in contemplating the extent to which Slavery still exists; and we feel it to be once more our religious duty to plead the cause of these suffering victims of avarice and cruelty, and to advocate the principles of righteousness, mercy, and truth.

Slavery is a grievous sin against God, who is the Almighty Ruler of the universe. "He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." In his infinite love and goodness, He has mercifully designed that the whole family of man should, without distinction, enjoy both liberty and happiness. But the human race are not only

brethren of one family by creation : they are all the objects of that redemption which comes through the Lord Jesus Christ: He tasted death for every man. The light of the Spirit of God shineth upon the hearts of all : “Jesus Christ enlighteneth every man who cometh into the world.” The religion which He taught enjoins us to love all men, and to do good to all. His commandment is, “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

With the full and free enjoyment of these great inalienable blessings of the Gospel, by his brethren of the African race, the slave-holder dares to interfere. He buys and sells his fellow-men, as he does the beasts that perish. He takes possession of their offspring and presumptuously calls them his property, thus preventing the exercise of those parental duties which God in his providence has appointed. The slave-holder exacts the unrequited labour of the slave according to his own caprice or pleasure, cruelly subjecting him to the torture of the whip. Holding and treating man as chattels, he so assumes the control of his will, his understanding, and his other faculties, that he interferes with the free performance of the worship of his Creator, and debars him from the full enjoyment of the Gospel of life and salvation. Man, without distinction of clime or colour, is placed on the earth as a moral, responsible being ; but the slave-holder deprives the slave of the means of fulfilling the duties which devolve upon him in this character. Man is endowed with talents which he is to employ and improve for the good of his race, and the glory of the gracious Giver ; but the slave-holder prevents the cultivation and the use of these talents ; and thus frustrates the purposes of Him who bestows them.

Other gross infractions of the Divine law are the consequences of this unrighteousness. The conjugal, parental, and filial affections are cruelly lacerated, and utterly disregarded. The tortures and indignities to which the slave

is subjected, depress and debase his mind. But such treatment does not deprive him of the conviction that he possesses the faculties of a rational being: hence a most humiliating sense of his degraded condition is often painfully felt. He sees those who are around him in the full enjoyment of their personal liberty; and his native love of freedom, his conviction that this is also his just and natural right, render his situation intolerable.

'This system, by which "great numbers of mankind, free by nature, are subjected to inextricable bondage, hath often been observed," to use the language of this meeting in the year 1758, "to fill their possessors with haughtiness, tyranny, luxury, and barbarity, corrupting the minds and debasing the morals of their children, to the unspeakable prejudice of religion and virtue, and the exclusion of that Holy Spirit of universal love, meekness, and charity, which is the unchangeable nature and the glory of true Christianity." These evil consequences of Slavery, which are thus forcibly set forth by a former generation, are equally descriptive of its effects at the present day; and such we believe will ever be the fruits of this complicated sin.

But a multiplied and an indescribable amount of cruelty and wickedness, is perpetrated to uphold and to continue the crime of Slavery. To its existence all the horrors of the Slave-trade may be traced, which is carried on by the continual practice of falsehood, deceit, and cunning: and which gives rise to, and fosters plunder, barbarity, and murder, and the exercise of all the wicked passions of the evil heart of man. The ravages and the wars which have been going on for centuries, for the purpose of procuring Slaves; and the consequent death of millions of human beings, are all to be attributed to the upholding of Slavery. The heart-rending sufferings on the voyages from the shores of Africa to the countries where Slavery prevails, have been often vividly depicted, though these

descriptions are far below the reality ; and these miseries still continue, the certain effects of such wickedness. May the Lord Almighty, in his infinite power and love, be pleased to hasten the day when they shall cease to exist.

In contemplating these wide-spread calamities, we rejoice with gratitude to the Author of every good, to be able to say that, with *very* little exception, Slavery is abolished by law throughout the colonies and dependencies of the British empire. Other European nations, however, possess colonies in which this crime has long existed. It is estimated that there are about three hundred and fifty thousand slaves in the colonies of France, and Holland, and Denmark. We observe, with sincere satisfaction, that the subject of Slavery is claiming the increased attention, both of the governments and the people of those countries. Spain still holds hundreds of thousands of Africans in cruel unmitigated bondage in her colonies of Cuba and Porto Rico, and carries on a dreadful Slave-trade to the African shores, to supply the places of thousands who annually die under the cruelties of Slavery. It is estimated that in the extensive and fertile empire of Brazil, where the Slave-trade still rages to a fearful extent, there are upwards of two millions of slaves.

In the United States of North America, within the limits of the federal government, which professes to be founded on the principles of equality, liberty, and justice, more than two millions and a half of slaves are held as property by their fellow-men. In addition to this, an extensive Slave-trade is carried on from one part of the Union to the other. Tens of thousands of men, women, and children, sometimes in families, at others by the forced and cruel separation of the tenderest ties of nature, are annually sold as articles of merchandise and sent from the old States, where they are reared for sale in large numbers,

and where the soil has been exhausted by Slave labour, to the more newly-settled States in the south-west; there to continue subjected to the wretchedness and the miseries of Slavery. What an outrage to all law, moral and divine!

The same system extensively prevails in many of the States on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, and in Egypt, with the inseparable appendages of cruelty and tyranny. But what can those who call themselves Christians say to Mahometans, when they have not cleared themselves of the sin? If, on the other hand, they had wholly delivered themselves from this evil, what could they not say, and that with powerful effect, to those States, and to other parts of the world where man is held in degrading bondage by his fellow-man?

This review comprehends a very brief notice of the sufferings of six millions of our brethren, exclusive of the countless thousands who annually die, either at the period of their capture, on their way to the coast, on their passage across the Atlantic, or on their arrival at the destined port. And let it be ever remembered that these miseries are inflicted upon men who are the innocent victims of such injustice.

So long as Slavery exists, there is no reasonable ground to expect but that the Slave-trade will in one form or another also continue to exist. Armed vessels, to which we as a religious body can give no countenance whatever, have for thirty years been fitted out at an enormous expenditure of money, and the loss of the lives of multitudes thus employed. But the Slave-trader pursues his course to as great an extent as when these measures were first attempted, and that in defiance of the efforts of Governments, and in utter disregard of humanity and justice.

We therefore feel ourselves engaged, in the love of Christ our Saviour, to call upon all men everywhere, and es-

pecially upon those who profess to believe in Him, to do what is in their power, in the spirit of the Gospel, to promote the utter and immediate extinction of Slavery; to consider what it is their duty to do, as in the Divine sight, to set the oppressed free, and to avail themselves of every suitable opportunity to plead their cause with those in authority. The iniquity of this practice has of later years been much more clearly and fully exposed; and in proportion to the light bestowed on the extent and the enormity of any sin will be our guilt, if we neglect to make use of this light.

We respectfully appeal to the Rulers, and to all in authority, in those nations which sanction Slavery; and we entreat them to use the influence entrusted to them by effecting the speedy adoption of those measures which would completely accomplish the object in view. We would remind the rulers of the responsibilities attached to them by the high stations which they hold in society. As they dare to do right, it will be much easier to accomplish the work than they may at present think. In this labour of love, of justice, and of mercy, they may ask for the blessing of God upon their efforts, and humbly trust that He will not withhold it.

We further intreat the intelligent and the humane everywhere; all, indeed, who love their fellow-men, to apply themselves to a patient, full, and impartial examination of the real character and extent of Slavery,—to give themselves up to feeling and to pity for the unhappy and innocent sufferers under this system of iniquity.

We earnestly beseech those to whom such an appeal more immediately applies, not to be influenced by prejudice against any of their fellow-men on account of the colour of their skin. All the unrighteous distinction, which is the result of this prejudice, tends to alienate that feeling of brotherhood which ought to prevail throughout the whole

family of man. In those countries where it is cherished, it forms one of the greatest barriers to the abolition of Slavery and the removal of its injurious consequences. And we believe it to be contrary to the will of God, to deprive any one, on account of a difference of colour from ourselves, of the entire and free enjoyment of all the civil and social rights and privileges of man.

All men may exercise an influence for good, if they act uprightly. We therefore invite our brethren, in our own country and elsewhere, to take a part in diffusing just and correct views of Slavery and the Slave-trade, and of the dreadful evils inseparable from them : they may thus essentially serve the cause of the suffering and the oppressed. It is as the community at large in any country are brought to act from conviction upon the eternal principles of righteousness, that the governments of such countries are strengthened to enact and to carry out wise legislative measures for the removal of national sins and the increase of the true happiness of man.

We fervently desire that every one who labours in this cause of justice and mercy may be concerned and strengthened to act in the spirit of love, with a sound mind, in Christian firmness, in the fear of God, and in humble, continual dependence on his blessing.

Our hearts turn with pity and with sorrow to the Slaveholders. Such are too generally and too mournfully the demoralizing effects of Slavery and the Slave-trade on those who are involved in this system of unrighteousness, that their consciences become seared and their hearts hardened by a continual familiarity with the circumstances by which they are surrounded. But we remember that the Slaveholders also are our brethren. In some instances they may have been introduced into their present situation by circumstances over which they had no control ; in others the mind may be more enlightened than it once was, to see

the sin of Slavery ; and then great must be the bitterness of their souls, when their consciences accuse them of living in continual violation of the law of God. If these pages should fall into the hands of a Slave-holder, we earnestly entreat him, in the love of the Gospel, to be willing that his eyes should be fully opened to see, and his heart to understand, his real position. May the Lord be pleased, by the light of his Holy Spirit, to show him the true character of Slavery and the Slave-trade, to bring home to his feelings and to his judgment the extent to which he is thus individually involved in these iniquities, and to give him strength utterly to clear himself from them.

May the Father of mercies, in his boundless love and power, direct and bless every effort made to put an end to this iniquity. And may the day be hastened, when violence and oppression shall no more be heard within the borders of Africa,—when Slavery shall wholly disappear from the face of the earth.

Signed in and on behalf of the Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, held in London, by adjournments, from the 22nd of the 5th month, to the 31st of the same inclusive, 1844,

By GEORGE STACEY,

Clerk to the Meeting this Year.