

mentions his "eight children" among the reasons against doing so. He adds,

"Lord, guide my heart and will aright, and lead me to determine for the best. Oh that I could from this day offer myself a living sacrifice to the Lord, doing or abstaining, speaking or being silent, spending or forbearing to spend, simply because it was the will of God!

"Oh that I could thus put off the old man and put on the new man! I think the time that is past should suffice me to have wrought my own will; and for the future let me try all things by this standard, 'Is it the will of God?' Oh, gracious God, this is what I would be; but what am I? Is one hundredth part of my time, talents, money, strength, spent for God? No!"

He determined at length to stand again for Weymouth. He was successful, and after announcing his re-election he proceeds:—"I heartily hope I may make some good use of my present privilege, and that some of the oppressed may be less miserable in consequence." From Weymouth he went to Bradpole to see his brother-in-law, Mr. W. Forster, before his departure to America.

To Mrs. Buxton.

"March 11. 1820.

"I came here to-day, and have much enjoyed seeing them. William, however, is grave and low. Now I think he has no right to be low; he barter his present happiness for a price incontestably above its real value, and having made up his mind to change perishable for imperishable, and imperfect for perfect, he ought only to rejoice that he has been wise enough to make so good a bargain. However, the sacrifice is a noble one, for I think I never saw two people more possessing their hearts' content."

To J. J. Gurney, Esq.

"Bradpole, March 12. 1820

"I have here a full opportunity of learning a lesson of humility. It is very well to do good and to serve one's country,

while at the same moment we are feeding our ambition and gratifying our pride; but what are the sacrifices I make? I may call them sacrifices, but their true name is, the pleasures I enjoy. Here, however, the pleasure and the sacrifice are totally at variance. How truly and exactly do the words, 'They left all and followed him,' convey my view of William's two years' absence from a home, a wife, a boy (not to mention the dear horse, and ducks, and flowers), the very darlings of his heart, all his wishes and desires centering in this spot! Well, I cannot pity him, I am more inclined to envy one who is wise enough to make a bargain so incontestably good. I went to Meeting with him twice to-day; his morning sermon on 'Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths,' was one of the very best I ever heard. But the text is one particularly interesting to me. I return home on Wednesday, and mean to study hard till Parliament meets, having at this time the following subjects in my mind:—The Criminal law; The Prisons; The Police; Botany Bay; The Slave Trade; The Practice of burning Widows in India, by Authority of the English Resident; Lotteries; Colonisation, viz., Land for supporting Schools, and Emancipation of Slaves; The Prosecution of the Quarterly Review by order of the House, for Libels on America:—cum multis aliis.

"So you see, my dear brother, I am likely to be fully engaged—whether usefully or not is at his disposal, who disposes all things; but I am thankful that He has given me a desire (mixed indeed, and polluted, but still a desire) to serve my brother men.

"The race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; and there are some very few occasions in which labour fails; but labour unactuated by selfish considerations, and solely fixing its eye on the goal of duty, and steadfastly determined to reach it, is, I believe, never defeated.

'His way once clear, he forward shot outright,
Not turned aside by danger or delight.'

"This spirit—high objects—and what is ten times better than either, a mind uninfected by vanity, no eye to self—these together will just accomplish every thing except impossibilities."

Thus far Mr. Buxton's career had been one of almost unchequered prosperity, — as a member of Parliament; as a man of business; as a husband; as the father of a large and promising family, his heart's desires had been fulfilled. His public undertakings were becoming daily more important and engrossing, and his home was a scene of unclouded happiness.

His valued friend, the Rev. Charles Simeon, thus writes to him from Cambridge:—

“ My dear Friend,

“ Jan. 14. 1820.

“ Certainly if I should live to visit your house again I shall do it with no little joy, for I do not expect to see in this world a brighter image of heaven than I was there privileged to behold. A sweet savour of love remained upon my spirit for a long time after, and I am not sure that it is quite evaporated yet. But I do not know that I shall not thrash you for supporting the Radicals. I look to you, under God, to be an instrument of great good in the House of Commons; and I would not that you should subvert the influence which your habits and talents are so calculated to command. * * * * I am no politician; but I feel a regard for you, and seem to think that the more I know of you the more my heart will be knit to you: so you must bear with this impudent letter, from one who is with no common affection,

“ Yours,

“ CHARLES SIMEON.”

But all this happiness was about to be marred by a rapid succession of calamities. Mr. Buxton had been hastily summoned back from the election, in consequence of the alarming illness of one of his children. His eldest son, a boy of ten years old, had been sent home from school unwell, but no suspicion of danger was at first excited; his disorder, however, proved to be inflammatory; and, in the course of a very few days, he sank under it. His father writes in his Journal—

“ Thus have we lost our eldest son, the peculiar object of our anxious care ; a boy of great life and animation ; of a most beautiful countenance ; of a most sweet disposition : and, blessed be God, we feel that in the whole event His mercy has been extended to us. We can rejoice and mourn together,—mourn at our loss, and rejoice that without exposure to the trials and temptations of the world it has pleased God to take him to himself. We feel the most certain assurance that he is with God ; and we feel persuaded that, if we could but be permitted to see him as he now is, we should never bewail him for another instant. ‘ He pleased God, and was beloved of Him, therefore, being among sinners, he was translated ; yea, he was speedily taken away, lest that wickedness should alter his understanding or deceit beguile his soul.’ ‘ He is gone unto Mount Zion.’ If these things be true, and true they most certainly are, can we repine, can we wish to recall him ? For myself, my heart’s desire and prayer has been, that this event may wean me from the world and fix my heart on God. * * * To-night I read Hopkins’ most admirable sermon, ‘ Death disarmed of its sting.’ O God, make me thy servant and soldier, was, and is, my prayer. * * * I went this morning and sat down on the top of the hill above my house ; I then prayed for myself, my wife, each of my children, especially Edward, now my eldest son ! and Harry ; for my servants ; for the heathen ; for the sanctification of my pursuits ; and God grant that my prayers are heard ! ”

His faith was destined to be more severely tried. The younger children, who were already suffering from the hooping-cough, were seized within a few days with the measles. He writes—

“ April 9.

“ This week has passed away in great anxiety for the remainder of my flock.”

“ Sunday night, April 16.

“ How wonderful are the ways of the Lord ; how sweet his mercies ; how terrible his judgments ! The week past has been one of the most acute anxiety. Oh ! when one affliction flows in upon us after another, may they burst the bonds by which we are tied to earth, may they direct us heavenward, and may we,

having our treasures in heaven, have our hearts there also. * * *
 * * * In myself how much is there of unholiness, of worldliness, of pride, of spiritual deadness! and, for myself, I would only now ask that the Lord would eradicate and extinguish these, at whatever cost, at whatever sacrifice. I have just been out walking, viewing this splendid starry night; what immeasurable mightiness does the firmament display! And when we consider that for all these innumerable worlds there is one Arbiter, one Sovereign Director, can we say aught else than 'Thy will be done? Cannot He who rules the universe decide what is best for the children he has lent me? May I yield to that will!'

The sacrifice was required from him, for in less than five weeks after the death of his son it pleased God also to take to himself the three infant daughters whose illness had excited such deep feeling. On the death of the eldest, a child of four years old, he writes:—

“‘Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.’ I had much desired her life, but willingly do I resign her into the hands of the Lord, praying him that he would mercifully make her death the means of turning me more nearly to the Lord.

“Thus, in little more than a month,” he adds, “have we lost the darlings and delights of our life; but they are in peace: and for ourselves, we know that this affliction may redound to our eternal benefit, if we receive it aright. * * * How are all our most choice and comely blossoms cut off; how naked do we appear, how stripped of our treasures! Oh, my God, my God! Be thou our consoler and comfort us, not with the joys of this world, but with faith, love, obedience, patience, and resignation.”*

“Tunbridge Wells, May 14. 1820.

“We came here with the fragments of our family, on Wednesday last, in hopes that the retirement and peace of this place may recruit the strength of my beloved wife. May God give her every blessing; and, for myself, my prayer is that this trial may not pass away, but may leave a durable impression.”

* “Eheu! Eheu!” was the simple epitaph he placed upon the tomb of his four children.

The diary from which this melancholy narrative has been drawn closes at this date ; and of the summer, which was chiefly spent at Tunbridge Wells, there are few notices, except that before mentioned of the passing of the Prison Discipline Bill, and an allusion, on the 8th of June, to the Queen's proposed trial.

“ Last night came on in the House the great events of the Queen, and I think I never spent an evening to so much advantage as this last. The case is this ; we are going into an inquiry which will lay bare the most disgraceful scenes in the Royal family on both sides ; the probable consequence will be, the impeachment of the Queen. The nation will be divided, and all the lower orders will be on her side : and the certain consequences, disturbances, riots, and bloodshed.

“ These considerations pressed much on my mind, and I called Wilberforce out of the House, and persuaded him to move for a delay of two days, for the purpose of preventing the necessity for such painful and disgraceful disclosures, which motion I seconded in a short, warm, decided, and well-applauded speech ; and the whole House were so much with us, that the Ministers were obliged to give way. I have been most warmly thanked by both sides. Brougham said, ‘ You may live fifty years, and do good every day, but you will never do as much as you have done this night.’ In short, the effort succeeded beyond expectation, and I am glad that I was able to persuade Wilberforce to take so decisive a step. He wavered a good deal, but when he spoke, he spoke most beautifully, and at considerable length ; his fine fancy played upon the subject.”

In the autumn of 1820, Mr. Buxton, who was no longer obliged to give much attention to the Brewery, and greatly needed rest and change, gave up his house at Hampstead, and became a resident, permanently as it proved, in the neighbourhood of Cromer.

At first he resided at Cromer Hall, an old seat of the Wyndham family, which no longer exists ; having many years ago been pulled down and replaced by a modern edifice.

It was situated about a quarter of a mile from the sea, but sheltered from the north winds by closely surrounding hills and woods; and, with its old buttresses and porches, its clustering jessamine, and its formal lawn, where the pheasants came down to feed, had a peculiar character of picturesque simplicity. The interior corresponded with its external appearance, and had little of the regularity of modern buildings; one attic chamber was walled up, with no entrance save through the window, and, at different times, large pits were discovered under the floor, or in the thickness of the walls, used, it was supposed, in old times by the smugglers of the coast.

Upon first settling at Cromer Hall he received under his roof Mrs. Buxton's youngest sister, Priscilla Gurney, who was then in an advanced stage of consumption, under which she sank in March, 1821.

This lady was a minister in the Society of Friends, like her sister Mrs. Fry, whom she greatly resembled, in uniting uncommon resolution and originality of character with the most winning gentleness of demeanour. Mr. Buxton had the highest opinion of her judgment and piety; and she exercised, as we shall see, a peculiar influence upon his subsequent career. He thus describes her:—

“ * * * I never knew an individual who was less one of the multitude than Priscilla Gurney. In her person, her manners, her views, there was nothing which was not the very reverse of commonplace. There was an air of peace about her, which was irresistible in reducing all with whom she conversed under her gentle influence. This was the effect on strangers; and in no degree was it abated by the closest intimacy: something there was, undoubtedly, in the beauty of her countenance, and in the extreme delicacy which constituted that beauty; in a complexion perfectly clear; in the simplicity and absence of all

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From a Sketch by Priscilla Gurney.

CROMER HALL.
1820.

decoration but that of the most refined neatness, which, altogether, conveyed to every one's mind the strongest conception of purity. And these attractions of person were aided by manners which nicely corresponded. * * * No less remarkable were the powers of her mind. I have seldom known a person of such sterling ability; and it is impossible to mention these mental powers without adverting to that great, and in my estimation, that astonishing display of them, which was afforded by her ministry. I have listened to many eminent preachers, and many speakers also, but I deem her as perfect a speaker as I ever heard. The tone of her voice, her beauty, the singular clearness of her conception, and, above all, her own strong conviction that she was urging the truth, and truth of the utmost importance—the whole constituted a species of ministry which no one could hear, and which I am persuaded no one ever did hear, without a deep impression.”

Whilst attending from time to time his duties in London, he thus writes to Mrs. Buxton, who had remained at Cromer Hall to nurse her sister:—

“Dec. 5. 1820.

“I am going to dine at St. Mildred's Court,* and, at 11 o'clock, two persons connected with the police come to me, and we go together through all the receptacles of rogues in the east end of the town. It will occupy about the whole of the night, but I think it right to do so. I never was more called into action than this time of being in town, so many objects of great good and importance offer themselves. To-day I have been much interested by the African Institution.”

“London, Jan. 13. 1821.

“I wrote a line yesterday just to mention my safe arrival, and to-day I have hardly time for more, for a flood of business has overtaken me. I have an engagement already for every day this week, and next week I shall have to bring forward a motion in the House, which will require some time and thought; but it is the weight and multitude of business which makes me happy! At Earham I read a piece of Paley's philosophy, which I found admirable. I was quite delighted with the vigour of thought

* With Mr. Fry.

which runs through it, and it gave me a train of thought which lasted almost to Ipswich. * * * I have felt very much leaving you all; but though I should enjoy being with you, I could stay no longer from Parliament with an easy mind, so we must be satisfied."

"Bellfield, Jan. 17. 1821.

"I arrived here safely yesterday, but with an adventure on the road. Just on this side of Andover, about 5 o'clock in the morning, my sweet slumbers were impaired by the coach suddenly coming over with a most noble crash. I directly perceived that I was unhurt, and my first feeling was one of thankfulness. As I was not injured, so I did not feel in the slightest degree hurried or disturbed, though rather anxious lest my books and apples should be lost through the prostrate window; so I first collected these, then I put on my spectacles, then exchanged my cap for my hat, and then ascended through the broken window and got upon the body of the coach, where I immediately delivered a lecture to the coachman on the impropriety of swearing at any time, but especially at the moment of deliverance from danger. We then went in various directions for help, with which, in about an hour and a half, we contrived to place the machine on its legs. My thoughts in the course of the journey had been dwelling on Providence a great deal; and, at the same time, I had been looking forward to future and distant plans, and had been strongly impressed with the recollection that all these might be baffled by the fracture of a linch-pin, or by any other slight cause, under the guidance of Him who rules the minute as well as the great events of life, and had had the text, 'Thou fool, this night,' &c., in my mind.

"I find my constituents in very good humour, but my coming was quite indispensable."

"Palace Yard, Sunday Jan. 25.

"I slept last night at Hampstead, and came this morning to Wheeler-street Chapel, where the service was very unusually affecting and interesting to me. My mind has been dwelling, or rather it has been fixed, on the love and mercy of God. I look upon myself as so signal an instance of his extreme mercy. As for my course of life, in that I have no pleasure and no confidence; I feel that I am halting between two opinions, that my heart is not His, who said, 'Give me thine heart:' that

there is a certain lukewarmness in things spiritual which forms no part of my character in things of much less importance: in a word, I seem to be 'stopping short' of that full dedication of self, which is, not a part, not merely an essential, but the very substance of the Christian character. I see before me a path far nobler than the one which I am treading. I could be an effectual servant of the Lord, directing the talents which he has placed at my disposal to his service (when I say talents, I mean not intellectual talents so much as circumstances, fortune, influence, &c.); and being not in some small degree, as is the case, nor almost, but altogether set upon serving God and man. Well! this is the mercy, that, negligent as I have been, yet He has still permitted me this day to draw near to Him in prayer. He has not rejected me altogether: He has this day permitted me to taste and know how good and how gracious He is; and the difference between the implacability of my own heart and the plenteous forgiveness which is with God, has powerfully exercised my mind.

"I think I never so much longed for you, but every time I do so I rejoice to think I have given you to my darling Priscilla. Do not think I repine at our separation. I am most thoroughly satisfied, and enjoy giving her anything I prize so highly. What a pleasure and a blessing has her visit to us this last autumn been! 'giving thanks always in every remembrance of her' is exactly my feeling. She must not fancy I pity her: I can most truly say I would this moment joyfully exchange situations with her, except that I should not like to cheat her into a bad bargain.

"Then as to——*", what do you think I have felt about her after all my complaints? only unmixed admiration for the good she did in spite of me. I say unmixed approbation of her zealous, unwearied, effectual services. I always strive at one thing, and that is to look at the truth. Passion, prejudice, temper, and twenty other weeds of the earth may have absolute occupancy and direction of my actions, but they shall not, if I can help it, pervert my judgment; and to my judgment her activity and effectuality have been admirable. Still, I think it ought to be a matter most seriously weighed by her, whether it would not be better to execute her objects more mildly, even

* A guest who had lately been staying at Cromer Hall.

at the expense of executing much less. The most attractive of all things is female gentleness, and besides it is the most influential of all things. It has a power which nothing else has upon the ruder bosoms of the lords of the creation. — does not know how much we require to be soothed and petted and coaxed, and how we are to be led by a thread, when a cart-rope will not drag us. In short, she must not be vehemently good, nor give to feebler brethren like myself a distaste for things which are excellent by her excessive ardour in the pursuit. From every good action there ought to be a double fruit, good to the object in contemplation, and good to the bystanders by example. Now it is very odd I should have run on thus, for I can truly say I have, since we parted, repeatedly scolded and upbraided myself, and only commended her. But I hope your giving her some of these hints, and reading her Pascal on the Art of Persuading (where he shows that, for one man who is subdued by force, ten are allured by ‘des agréments’), may be of use; and so my very kind love to her.”

“ Hampstead, Jan. 27.

“ I have had my hands brimfull of business this last week, but it has not fatigued me as parliamentary business does; there is no stress on the mind, no anxiety, no apprehension that a good cause may suffer by my inattention or incapacity, which is wearisome in Parliament. We had a pleasant dinner party at the Duke of Gloucester’s yesterday. I had spent the morning with Wilberforce, who was quite delightful. I begin to think, that of all men he is the most subjected and controlled, and invariably in the right frame of temper. I say ‘begin’ because he is beginning to share the seat in my mind which Joseph has so long occupied. * * * I shall finish my examination of the boys when I am at Cromer, so let Miss — tremble. Tell her from me, that I look with unmixed satisfaction to her superintendence of their education; and I am sure, if she give them vigour of mind — ‘a mind not to be changed,’ a determination to accomplish their object by dint of resolution, and an unconquerable fixed will to succeed, she will give them what is worth more than wealth, or rank, or anything else, except one thing, which if they have not, I trust they never will have this energy, because this energy is a great instrument, and, if ill employed, a great instrument of evil.”

To one of his little boys.

" Jan. 28.

" I have had a fine gallop this morning on your capital horse ' Radical.' I ride him and Abraham every day, and always as fast as they can go, because I have so much to do that I cannot behave like little Lord Linger. I hope that when you are a man you will be very industrious and do all the good you can. There are a great many poor people who are very sick, and yet have no money to buy food, or clothes, or physic; and there are many more so ignorant that they never heard of the Bible, and think they do very right when they roast and eat their enemies! If you think this is very right, and that it is kind to stick a man on a spit and dress him like a pig, why, don't try to prevent it! But if you think it very wrong, then be sure you do all you can to stop it. Do you know, one good industrious man may do a great deal; and, if you wish to be of that sort, you must begin by being diligent now. But there is a much more important thing than even being diligent, that is being good. I don't much like to bring you a horn, because I am sure you will disturb the hen-pheasants, and so we shall have no young ones."

Mr. Buxton belonged, it has been said above, to the African Institution, the Society set on foot by Mr. Wilberforce and his coadjutors, in order to watch over the law, which with so much difficulty had been obtained in 1807, abolishing the Trade in Slaves between Africa and our Colonies. Having in a great measure effected this purpose, and secured the ostensible acquiescence of France, Portugal, and other nations, in the same measure, the Institution had at length sunk into a state of comparative inactivity.

To Mrs. Buxton.

" Jan. 30.

" I had engaged to go down to Coggeshall yesterday, shoot there to-day, and return to-morrow night; happily, as I think, I got notice of the meeting of the African Institution for to-day, so I put off my shooting excursion. In the course of the

meeting an opportunity occurred, which I could not pass over, of declaring my mind, as to the inactivity and ineffectiveness of the Society. I told them that it was certain we once had the confidence of the country; and it was now certain the public knew little and cared little on the subject. I have often spoken plainly and been condemned by others; a few times I have done so and blamed myself, but in this instance I really felt, and still feel, exceedingly grateful that I did not shrink from the duty. My remonstrance was well received, and a meeting was appointed for Saturday next, at Lord Lansdowne's, of all the members of both Houses interested in the subject, and perhaps it may be a means of great good. I tell all this long story for my dear Priscilla, who exhorted me not to neglect this, the first and most melancholy of all subjects. I thoroughly enjoyed the dear boys' letters, but I can't think that I shall find they know so much as they talk about when I get home. My hands are rather full: Thursday, the Brewery. Friday, Cape of Good Hope Slave Trade. Saturday, Lord Lansdowne's. Monday, Prison Bill. Tuesday, Brougham's Bill on Education. Wednesday, I made a speech to the children in Spitalfields. Thursday, Brewery and Mail Coach. Friday, home! I want two heads, two bodies, and the power of being in two places at once."

"Feb. 3.

"I was quite astonished at Wilberforce yesterday. I had not seen him since my vehement reprobation of the African Institution. Yesterday he was warm to excess; over and over again he thanked me for the boldness and openness of my remarks, and said they had penetrated deeply into his heart."

"March 8.

"I really do earnestly desire to write to you more fully, and to express how much my heart is yours and with you, but how can I? I left the House last night at one o'clock, very hot, and could not get to sleep: up this morning and full gallop to Hampstead; then to the Brewery on important business: then a gallop to a meeting of Daniel Wilson's society for the education of young clergymen, where, among the rest, I saw John and Francis Cunningham; I was quite pleased to see them again. The meeting was highly interesting, and the society seems doing so much good, that I am not sure but I shall to-morrow send

them a large donation. I did not to-day, for I am not fond of doing such things under the impulse of feeling.

“ I afterwards saw R., who appeared to me to be doing her duty to her father ; and, in my estimation, besides the duty to her father, the habit of doing it, and the credit of doing it, are of the highest importance to her.

“ Poor dear Priscilla, how sorry I am that she should have any pain ! but she is near the land where neither sorrow nor pain enters, and might with much more reason pity us than receive pity from us. Wilberforce was charmed with her message.”

“ March 12.

“ John and Francis Cunningham came and dined at my lodgings, and we had a very pleasant evening. I almost determined to go over to Harrow yesterday, as John has a lecture for me on the neglect of private prayer. Alas ! there is more truth in the charge than he knows, and since I heard his notions as to myself the subject has been much on my mind.”

“ March 15.

“ Wilberforce dined with me on Tuesday last, and was quite delightful.—He gave us a long account of his early life and friends, and said one thing which has much stuck by me. I asked him who was the greatest man he ever knew ? He said, ‘ Out of all comparison, Pitt ! but,’ he added, ‘ I never think of his superiority without reflecting, that he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.’ Now I see clearly that in this world I shall never be anything but a mere moderate—‘ behind the foremost, and before the last.’ But for this I really do not care. I am, however, thoroughly discontented with my progress in better things, and wonder at myself whenever I reflect on them at all. Did Francis tell you of the lecture designed for me at Harrow ? I must and will have it, for I am much inclined to think that my lower state in such matters arises from my neglect of spirituality, and of the appointed method of attaining it. I am in a sad scrape at Weymouth. They are going to have races, ‘ to the great benefit of the town and amusement of the company—fully calculate on my subscription and William’s.’ He wrote, acceding, but I have refused, for I feel a scruple against them. My dearest love to you all. Let the boys tell me what I am to buy them as presents.”

His sister-in-law's illness was now rapidly increasing. He writes —

“ London, March 20.

“ As for dearest Priscilla, I neither grieve for the bad account of yesterday, nor rejoice at the more favourable one of to-day. I feel her given to the Lord, and I am sure that He is about her bed, and that He loves her, and that whatsoever shall happen to her will be sent in peculiar tenderness; and in these certain truths I commit her to Him without fear or repining. She is inexpressibly dear to my inmost soul, but I look upon her as a saint already in the hands of the Lord. * * * * I have tried to pray for her, but I cannot. My prayers turn into praises, and my mourning into joy. And, after all, if we lose her, what is it? Let our thoughts range through eternity, dropping only the trifle of the next fifty years, and what can we desire beyond her present state? We are sure that her God whom she served in her strength, protects, cherishes and will guard her from evil in her sickness. If she is destined to dwell in His presence for evermore, will not this satisfy those who love her dearly? I say again, I am satisfied and joyful in her state, and can with unbounded and satisfied confidence commit her to the Lord, and shall be almost glad if you tell her I send no message of hope or fear, neither can I hope or fear.”

“ March 22.

“ On receiving your letter, the first impulse was to set off directly, but a meeting about the Slave Trade to-morrow morning, and a debate about the Slave Trade to-morrow evening; a meeting with Stephen on the same subject on Wednesday; and that of the Sunday School children on Wednesday evening, are reasons which seem to supersede every inclination. On the other hand, I ardently long to see my beloved Priscilla again, and the recollection, that she desired you to tell me that she had something to say to me, weighs in the strongest manner upon me. I would not, on any account, lose whatever this may be, whether of love, or advice, or reproof. Circumstanced, however, as I am, I have determined to wait, at least till to-morrow's account comes.”

He soon after left London, and reached Cromer Hall

in time to receive those dying injunctions which his sister-in-law had been so anxious to lay upon him. What these were we shall see hereafter. After her death* he was compelled to return almost immediately to London. He writes thence: —

“ I was quite out of heart all yesterday, and could neither speak at the public meeting, nor study at night. However, I was determined not to yield to low spirits, and, by dint of obstinacy, I at length did get to work, and continued till one o'clock in the morning.”

A few days later he speaks of “ working very, very hard.” In addition to the questions of Prison Discipline, Criminal Law, and the Slave Trade, in which he took so much interest, his attention had been drawn, chiefly through the facts laid before him by the Rev. Mr. Peggs, a Baptist missionary just returned from India, to the subject of Suttee, viz. the self-immolation of Hindoo widows. Having collected a large mass of information, he determined to bring it before Parliament; and, in the course of the session, he made two motions on the subject. In his speech on the second occasion he proved that within the last four years, in the Residency of Fort William alone, 2366 widows had been committed to the flames! — that the French, Dutch, and other powers in India had abolished the custom in their territories, while the stigma of its continuance still rested on the British Government; and he showed that, so far from being voluntary, this cruel martyrdom was generally forced upon the unhappy widow, either by superstitious priests or interested relations.

* A letter of Mr. Simeon's on this occasion will be found in page 551. of his Memoir.

Several years, however, elapsed before anything of importance was accomplished in this matter, the question being one which fell within the province of the India House, rather than of the House of Commons.

The Committee which had been appointed in the preceding year to inquire into the working of the Criminal laws had now closed its labours, and Sir James Mackintosh's bill for the abrogation of the punishment of death in cases of forgery, arose from its report. A speech of Mr. Buxton's upon this bill* excited great notice at the time; the drift of it was, to prove that the law, as it stood, was at once inhuman and ineffective: that the severity of the punishment induced judges and jurors to strive for an acquittal: and that the uncertainty of the greater penalty was therefore more readily incurred than the certainty of the lesser one.

“ We have gone on long enough,” said Mr. Buxton, “ taking it for granted that capital punishment does restrain crime, and the time is now arrived in which we may fairly ask, Does it do so ?

“ It has been tried long enough — we have tried nothing else for the last century. And on a scale large enough — the law

England has displayed no unnecessary nicety in apportioning the punishment of death: kill your father, or a rabbit in a warren, the penalty is the same! Destroy three kingdoms, or a hopbine, the penalty is the same! Meet a gipsy on the high road, keep company with him, or kill him, the penalty by law is the same!

“ The system, then, having been tried long enough, and largely enough, what are the results? Has your law done that which you expected from your law? Has crime decreased? Has it remained stationary? Certainly not. Has it increased? It certainly has, and at a prodigious rate.† Why, then, your system has failed!”

* May 23. 1821.

† In twelve years crime had increased fourfold.

Only one experimental fact had been brought forward on the other side. In the case of larceny from the person, mitigation had been tried; and the convictions for that crime had increased. But then every other crime had increased in an equal or greater ratio. That is to say, no more had been gained by inflicting capital punishments than by not inflicting them.

“ We have done as well without as with the capital punishment. That is, our case is proved. To inflict death needlessly can be called by no other name than that of legal murder.

“ Now, at the same period, two experiments were tried. In the one case, we proceeded from lenity to rigour; in the other, from rigour to lenity. Here, then, principle is opposed to principle, system to system, and the result is before us. First, in 1807, forgery of stamps was made a capital crime. And the question is, with what effect?

“ By the confession of the solicitor of the Excise the crime has not abated, but the prosecutions have abated to one-half. The Excise was better protected by your former lenity than by your late rigour.

“ But another experiment was tried, very different in its nature, and (I rejoice to say) as different in its effects. In 1811 the linen-bleachers came to Parliament * * * praying for a mitigation in the law against stealing from bleaching grounds. That prayer was conceded; in this House cheerfully. In another place acquiescence was granted somewhat in the same spirit in which the satirist describes the deities of old as yielding to the foolish importunities of their votaries.

‘ Evertère domos totas, optantibus ipsis
Di faciles.’

And here it was determined to punish these romantic petitioners with the fulfilment of their prayer, and to inflict upon them the penalty of conceded wishes.

“ With what effect? * * * To answer this question, I will enter,” he says, “ into a comparison of which no man will deny the fairness. I will take the last five years during which the crime was capital — and the last five years during which it has

not been capital. Now, if I prove that this offence has increased, but only in the same proportion with other offences, I prove my point for reasons which I have already assigned. But if I go a step farther, and prove that, while all other offences have increased with the most melancholy rapidity, this, and this alone, has decreased as rapidly, that there is one only exception to the universal augmentation of crime, and that one exception is in the case in which you have reduced the penalty of your law; if I can do this, and upon evidence which cannot be shaken, have I not a right to call upon the noble lord opposite, and upon His Majesty's ministers, either to invalidate my facts or to admit my conclusion?"

He then read the official returns of crimes committed in the duchy of Lancaster, whence it appeared that, before the mitigation of the law, this offence had been as rife as the other capital offences; but, since that mitigation, all the capital offences had increased prodigiously*, while this offence had *decreased two-thirds*.

"No man," he continued, "would justify severity for the sake of severity itself, or would love executions in the abstract. We have dispensed with them in one case, and the consequence is, fewer crimes, — greater security to property. Shall we stop there?"

He then adverted to the punishment of forgery: —

"For a multitude of years," he said, "every wretch who was overtaken by the law, without regard to age, or sex, or circumstances in extenuation, was consigned to the hangman. You accomplished your object, no doubt! By dint of such hardness you exterminated the offence as well as the offenders; forgeries of course ceased in a country under such a terrible method of repressing them! No! but they grew, they multiplied, they increased to so enormous an extent — victim so followed victim, or rather one band of victims was so ready to follow another — that you were absolutely compelled to mitigate your law, because

* For instance, stealing from dwelling-houses was a capital offence: it had increased *eleven-fold*.

of the multitude of the offenders,—because public feeling and the feeling of the advisers of the crown rebelled against such continual slaughter.

“Have I not then a right to cast myself upon the House, and to implore them no longer to continue so desperate and so unsuccessful a system; and to lay side by side the two cases—forgery and stealing from bleaching grounds,—both offences only against property—both unattended with violence? In the one we have tried a mitigation of the law, and have succeeded beyond our most sanguine expectations; in the other we have tried severity to the utmost extent—and to the utmost extent it has failed. Well then: are we not bound—I will not say by our feelings or by tenderness for life—but by every principle of reason and equity, of common sense and common justice, to discontinue a system which has so utterly failed, and to embrace a system which has been so eminently successful?”

Such were the results of the experiments made in our own time and country. He furnished others from history. Henry VIII. hanged 72,000 persons for robbery alone; yet Sir Thomas More wonders that “while so many thieves were daily hanged, so many still remained in the country, robbing in all places.”

Queen Elizabeth hanged more than 500 criminals a year; yet complained bitterly that the people would not carry out her laws, and was obliged to appoint stipendiary magistrates to inflict these penalties. We find from Strype that the people would not prosecute and the magistrates would not act.

So ill, in these two cases, had the rigorous system succeeded.

He then noticed the happy effects resulting from the relaxation of penalties by King Alfred; and in modern times by the Duke of Tuscany and by the United States of America, and he concluded his observations upon this part of the subject with this remark:—

“Crime has increased in England as compared with every other

country—as compared with itself at different periods. Now what species of crime has increased? Precisely those lesser felonies which are capital now, but were not formerly—which are capital in England, but in no other country!”

He had next to remove a common but false impression that the Criminal Code was part of the Common Law.

He first made quotations from the codes of the Saxons, Danes, and Normans, which were palpably at variance with the spirit of our Penal Code. They were as tender of human life as the Code was reckless in destroying it. He proved this also from Coke, Blackstone, and Spelman.

“It is a fact,” said he, “that six hundred men were condemned to death last year, upon statutes passed within the last century.”

After showing the hurried and careless manner in which bills for inflicting death without benefit of clergy had continually passed the House, without debate or discussion, he stated his affection and reverence for the English Common Law, and the unwillingness he would have felt to attack it, and therefore claimed “a right to gather confidence and encouragement from finding a friend and advocate in that pre-eminent authority.” He continues,

“There is no country in which public co-operation is not important to the execution of the law; but in England this concurrence between the people and the law is absolutely indispensable. It is taken for granted, that he who can, will inform—that the person aggrieved will prosecute. All this is taken for granted, and was justly so taken, as long as public feeling went along with the law; but now a man’s life is at issue, and this at once seals the lips of the man who could inform, pacifies the prosecutor, silences the witness, and sometimes even sharpens the merciful astuteness of the judge. In fact and in truth it effects the deliverance of the felon

“But worse than this, there is a price which we have to pay, of which, if I can prove the existence and extent, no man will deny that in itself it more than countervails every conceivable advantage,—I mean the perjury of jurymen.”

After giving a number of instances where juries had clearly perjured themselves in order to save the lives of prisoners,—

“I hold in my hand,” he says, “1200 cases of a similar description. Is it then policy or prudence—I say nothing of its wickedness—to tamper with what is so very delicate, or even to permit the reputation of that oath to be impaired, or any stain to be cast upon its purity? But when the public see twelve respectable men, in open court, in the face of day, in the presence of a judge, calling God to witness that they will give their verdict according to the evidence, and then declaring their belief in things, not merely very strange or uncommon, but actual physical impossibilities, absolute miracles, wilder than the wildest legends of monkish superstition,—what impression on the public mind must be made, if not this—that there are occasions in which it is not only lawful, but commendable, to ask God to witness palpable and egregious falsehood?”

Referring to the evidence which had been given by a multitude of persons in very different situations, of very different habits and opinions, as to the pernicious effects of the system of severe punishment upon all classes of society,—

“I ask,” he said, “how happens it that persons so various—filling situations so various—merchants, bankers, solicitors of the Excise, shop-keepers, solicitors of the Old Bailey, officers of the police, clerks of the police offices, magistrates, and jurymen—men bound together by no similarity of pursuit, no identity of interest,—by no party feeling, political or religious,—how happens it, I ask, that such persons should

‘Weave such agreeing truths, or how, or why,
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?’

* * * Shall we accede to this rational solution of the uniformity of their testimony? Shall we not rather conclude that

they all spoke alike because they all spoke the truth, and that the uniformity of the evidence arose from the uniformity of the observation?

“ And this opinion of practical men being corroborated by the opinions of men of profound thought and great learning—of Chillingworth, Johnson, Franklin, Pitt, Fox; of More, Bacon, Coke, Clarendon, Ashburton, and Blackstone; I say, when I see that the conclusion at which the wisest men have arrived by dint of reason is the same conclusion at which the most practical men have arrived by dint of experience; and that this, the speculation of the learned, and the observation of those that gather up their notions from the busy scenes of life, has been put to the test in America and in Tuscany, and that there it has realised more than the most sanguine expectation;—and further, that this system is the Common Law of England, and is common sense:—I say, when I have such a body of evidence and argument—of fact and authority—of reason and experience,—and when our adversaries, members of a committee which sat for many months, never once ventured to hint at an authority, or to produce a witness who could gainsay the truth of those doctrines which I am maintaining;—when I have so much in my favour, and so very little against me, I cannot but indulge the hope that the noble lord opposite and the Government will do justice to the country by aiding the milder but more efficient doctrines of penal legislation which we have endeavoured to promulgate.”

He concluded his speech thus:—

“ My argument then is this. Our system is before us. The price we pay for our system is,—the loss of public opinion, and the aid (the best, the cheapest, and the most constitutional) which the law gathers from the concurrence of public opinion; the necessity of doing that by spies, informers, and blood-money, which were better done without them; the annual liberation of multitudes of criminals; the annual perpetration of multitudes of crimes, perjury, and the utter abandonment of the first of your duties, the first of your interests, and the greatest of all charities—the prevention of crime. This is what you pay. And for what? For a system which has against it a multitude of divines, moralists, statesmen, lawyers,—an unrivalled phalanx

of the wise and good ; a system which has against it the still stronger authority of practical men, who draw their conclusions from real life ; a system which has against it the still stronger authority of the Common Law of England ; which, if wrong now, is wrong for the first time ; a system which has against it the still stronger authority of experience and experiment, in England on the one hand — in Tuscany, in America, and elsewhere, on the other : and, finally, a system which, in its spirit and its temper, is against the temper and the spirit of that mild and merciful religion ‘ which desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live ! ’ ”

Numerous were the expressions of approbation which this speech called forth. Sir James Mackintosh said in the House, that it was “ the most powerful appeal that he had ever had the good fortune to hear within the walls of Parliament.”* And in a subsequent debate Mr. (now Lord) Denman remarked, that “ more of wisdom, more of benevolence, more of practical demonstration he had never heard in the course of his parliamentary career, than was contained in the energetic speech of his honourable friend.”

When, however, the division took place on the question, “ That the bill for the mitigation of the punishment of death for forgery do pass,” the Ayes were 115, and the Noes 121 : and the bill was consequently lost !

On the 5th of June, 1822, Sir James Mackintosh again brought forward the question, and was again seconded by Mr. Buxton. They succeeded in carrying by a majority of sixteen the motion, “ That the House will in the next session consider the means of increasing the efficacy of the Criminal Law, by abating the rigour of its punishments.”

In 1823, however, the resolutions proposed by Sir

* Hansard, May, 1821.

James Mackintosh were rejected, and he and his friends were still struggling against a superior force, when in 1826, Mr. Peel, on his accession to office, undertook the momentous task of remodelling the whole penal code.

An account will be given, in its proper place, of the final result of the movement for the mitigation of that sanguinary code, by which, at the period when first Sir Samuel Romilly, and afterwards Sir James Mackintosh and Mr. Buxton brought the subject forward, two hundred and thirty offences were punishable with death!

CHAPTER VIII.

SLAVERY. 1821—1823.

MR. BUXTON IS CHOSEN BY MR. WILBERFORCE AS HIS PARLIAMENTARY SUCCESSOR. — COMMON CONFUSION OF “SLAVERY” WITH “SLAVE TRADE.” — PREVIOUS IMPRESSIONS ON MR. BUXTON’S MIND. — PRISOILLA GURNEY’S DYING WORDS. — HE STUDIES THE SUBJECT. — LONG DELIBERATIONS. — FEAR OF SERVILE REVOLT. — UNDERTAKES TO ADVOCATE THE QUESTION. — LETTERS FROM MR. WILBERFORCE. — REFLECTIONS. — SUTTEE. — THE QUAKER’S PETITION. — LETTER TO EARL BATHURST. — THE FIRST DEBATE ON SLAVERY. — MR. CANNING’S AMENDMENTS. — AMELIORATIONS IN THE SLAVE’S CONDITION RECOMMENDED TO THE COLONISTS. — LETTER TO SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH.

THE evening after Mr. Buxton had delivered his speech on Criminal Law he received the following letter from Mr. Wilberforce : —

“ My dear Buxton,

“ London, May 24. 1821.

“ It is now more than thirty-three years since, after having given notice in the House of Commons that I should bring forward, for the first time, the question concerning the Slave Trade, it pleased God to visit me with a severe indisposition, by which indeed I was so exhausted that the ablest physician in London of that day declared that I had not stamina to last above a very few weeks. On this I went to Mr. Pitt and begged of him a promise, which he kindly and readily gave me, to take upon himself the conduct of that great cause.

“ I thank God I am now free from any indisposition ; but from my time of life, and much more from the state of my constitution, and my inability to bear inclemencies of weather and irregularities, which close attendance on the House of Commons often requires, I am reminded, but too intelligibly, of my being in such a state that I ought not to look confidently to my being

able to carry through any business of importance in the House of Commons.

“ Now for many, many years I have been longing to bring forward that great subject, the condition of the negro slaves in our Trans-atlantic colonies, and the best means of providing for their moral and social improvement, and ultimately for their advancement to the rank of a free peasantry; a cause this, recommended to me, or rather enforced on me, by every consideration of religion, justice, and humanity.

“ Under this impression I have been waiting with no little solicitude for a proper time and suitable circumstances of the country, for introducing this great business; and latterly, for some Member of Parliament, who, if I were to retire or to be laid by, would be an eligible leader in this holy enterprise.

“ I have for some time been viewing you in this connection; and after what passed last night I can no longer forbear resorting to you, as I formerly did to Pitt; and earnestly conjuring you to take most seriously into consideration the expediency of your devoting yourself to this *blessed service*, so far as will be consistent with the due discharge of the obligations you have already contracted, and in part so admirably fulfilled, to war against the abuses of our Criminal Law, both in its structure and its administration. Let me then entreat you to form an alliance with me, that may truly be termed holy, and if I should be unable to commence the war (certainly not to be declared this session); and still more, if, when commenced, I should (as certainly would, I fear, be the case) be unable to finish it, do I entreat that you would continue to prosecute it. Your assurance to this effect would give me the greatest pleasure: pleasure is a bad term — let me rather say, peace and consolation; for alas! my friend, I feel but too deeply how little I have been duly assiduous and faithful in employing the talents committed to my stewardship; and in forming a *partnership* of this sort with you I cannot doubt that I should be doing an act highly pleasing to God, and beneficial to my fellow creatures. Both my head and heart are quite full to overflowing, but I must conclude. My dear friend, may it please God to bless you, both in your public and private course. If it be His will, may He render you an instrument of extensive usefulness; but above all, may He give you the disposition to say at all times, ‘ Lord, what

wouldest thou have me to do or to suffer?' looking to Him, through Christ, for wisdom and strength. And while active in business and fervent in spirit upon earth, may you have your conversation in heaven, and your affections set on things above. There may we at last meet together, with all we most love, and spend an eternity of holiness and happiness complete and unassailable.

" Ever affectionately yours,
" W. WILBERFORCE."

Many causes had been concurring to prepare Mr. Buxton for entering upon this " holy enterprise." His attention had, at an early period, been drawn, though slightly, to the questions of Slavery and the Slave Trade. In one of his private memoranda he enumerates among the causes for thankfulness, " the strong impression on my mother's mind, transfused into mine in very early life, of the iniquity of Slavery and the Slave Trade;" and he notices a remark which she often made, " while we continue to commit such a sin how can we ask forgiveness of our sins?" He mentions also that he used to ridicule his eldest sister for refusing to eat slave-grown sugar; " but," he adds, " her doing so made me think. Singular, too, that my first speech on entering college was upon the Slave Trade, and my first speech on entering life was at the Tower Hamlets on the same subject."

We have seen that he had become an active member of the African Institution; and although that body devoted its attention to the Slave Trade alone, and did not take up the kindred question of Slavery, yet his connection with it no doubt contributed to turn his mind to the varied sufferings of the negro race.

The reader need scarcely be reminded that the importation of fresh negroes from Africa to our colonies had been declared illegal in 1807, after a twenty years' struggle on the part of Mr. Wilberforce, Mr. Stephen,

Mr. Clarkson, and their distinguished coadjutors; and England had no sooner abolished her own trade, than with characteristic energy she strove to obtain, by persuasion or by purchase, a similar measure from the other European powers. Whilst, however, the British *Slave Trade* had been abolished, British *Slavery*, remained. Though no fresh negroes could now be introduced into our colonies, yet those who had been already imported were still held in bondage. It is singular how often the Slave Trade is confounded with Slavery, even in quarters where such a blunder would be least expected.

There were various reasons which prevented those who had effected the abolition of the Slave Trade from attempting also the emancipation of the slaves*; but we see in Mr. Wilberforce's letter that the latter was a subject which constantly weighed upon his mind, and filled him with painful solicitude.

When Mr. Buxton first entered Parliament, his attention was drawn to this question by a letter from his brother-in law, Mr. William Forster, who, after describing the interest taken by Mr. Buxton's friends in his efforts for the improvement of prison discipline, expresses their earnest desire that he would "take up another most important and extensive question, the state of Africa, and of the slave population in the West Indies." "The attention and exertions of the wise and good," proceeds Mr. Forster, "have been directed, and, through the Divine blessing, not without much success, towards staying the progress of evil in the abolition of the Slave Trade; but now it is certainly time to turn

* In 1807, Earl Percy (afterwards Duke of Northumberland) proposed the emancipation of the negro children, but without effect.

the mind of the British public towards the situation of those in actual slavery.”

Another circumstance, to which Mr. Buxton often referred, had prepared his mind for accepting the proffered advocacy of the Anti-slavery cause. He thus mentions it in a letter dated Oct. 22. 1821:—

“Two or three days before Priscilla Gurney died, she sent for me, as desiring to speak to me about something of importance. The moment she began to speak she was seized with a convulsion of coughing, which continued for a long time, racking her feeble frame. She still seemed determined to persevere, but at length, finding all strength exhausted, she pressed my hand and said, ‘The poor, dear slaves!’ I could not but understand her meaning, for during her illness she had repeatedly urged me to make their cause and condition the first object of my life, feeling nothing so heavy on her heart as their sufferings.”

It was not, however, till after long and mature deliberation, that he accepted the weighty charge involved in Mr. Wilberforce’s proposal. Indeed, he does not appear to have fully resolved upon undertaking it till a year and a half after the receipt of Mr. Wilberforce’s letter; but he spent the interval as far as his other avocations would permit him, in a close study of the question in all its bearings. In this he was materially assisted by the present of a large collection of books connected with the subject from Mr. Hoare, one of the earliest members of the African Institution.

Many of his other friends encouraged him to enter upon this arduous undertaking, especially Mr. Samuel and Mr. Joseph John Gurney; from whom, as from Mr. Samuel Hoare, he received unremitting assistance throughout the contest against slavery.

What chiefly led him to hesitate in adopting this question as his own, was the fear that the discussion of it in

England might lead to a servile insurrection in the West Indies. He deeply felt the weight of this responsibility, and it was the subject of long and anxious thought. "If," said he, "a servile war should break out, and 50,000 perish, how should I like that?" But even this extreme supposition he met by the consideration, "If I had two sons I would rather choose to have one free and one dead, than both living enslaved." In his first Anti-slavery speech he enters at length into this difficulty, and mentions some of the considerations which had removed it from his mind; showing how often insurrections had been foretold by the West Indians, and, that their predictions had never been fulfilled; and further, that, even were this fear well grounded, the English government ought not to be terrified by it from examining into the infinitely greater evil in question.

He appears to have arrived at his final decision in the autumn of 1822; in the course of which Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. Macaulay visited Cromer Hall, for the purpose of discussing the question with him, and also with Dr. Lushington and Lord Suffield. Then was drawn the first outline of those plans in which each, from this time, took his respective and important share.

Mr. Wilberforce writes, after leaving Cromer: —

"My dear Buxton,

"Oct. 5. 1822.

We brought much away from Cromer Hall, but we left there, as I have just discovered, O'Meara's 'Voice from St. Helena.' My dear friend, never I believe, while I remember anything, shall I forget the truly friendly reception we experienced under your hospitable roof. I love to muse about you all, and form suitable wishes for the comfort and good of each member of your happy circle—for a happy circle it is—and surely there is nothing in the world half so delightful as mutual confidence, affection and sympathy—to feel esteem as well as good-will towards every human being around you, not only in your own

house, but in the social circle that surrounds your dwelling, and to be conscious that every other being is glowing with the same esteem and love towards you. I hope it is not profane to say, that when associated with heavenly aspirations and relations, such a state is a sort of little heaven upon earth. My dear friend, never shall I direct henceforth to Cromer Hall without a number of delightful associations. God bless you all,—and so I trust he will. It is quite refreshing in such a world as this to think what a globule of friendship has been accumulated at Cromer from different little drops sprinkled over the sea-side. Give my kind remembrances to Mrs Buxton, Priscilla, the Hoares, Mrs. Upcher, and indeed to all friends; to Mr. and Mrs. J. Gurney, and my old friend Mr. Hoare; to the Lushingtons and Lord Suffield, whom I hope to know better. Meanwhile,

“ I am, ever affectionately yours,

“ W. WILBERFORCE.” *

A short time afterwards Mr. Wilberforce again wrote, to request that he would visit him at Marden Park to arrange their plan of operations for the ensuing session. He adds : —

“ I have often rejoiced of late years in thinking of my having you for an associate and successor, as indeed I told you. Now, my dear Buxton, my remorse is sometimes very great, from my consciousness that we have not been duly active in endeavouring to put an end to that system of cruel bondage which for two centuries has prevailed in our West Indian colonies; and my idea is, that a little before Parliament meets, three or four of us should have a secret cabinet council, wherein we should deliberate to decide what course to pursue.”

* The following verses, descriptive of Mr. Wilberforce, were written by Mr. Buxton during this visit, as part of a playful address to a travelling conjuror, named Lee Sugg.

“ Farewell, meagre Sugg, we are bound to attend
On a guest who's at once our instructor and friend
A conjuror too !—even there he will meet you,
And at your own weapons undoubtedly beat you.
A wizard is he—to allure away grief,
To give hope to the sad, to the wretched relief
And what are the strange incantations he uses,
When sorrow he scatters, and joy he diffuses ?
Himself is the charm, his manners are spells,
A conjuring art in his converse there dwells
There's magic we know—and poor Africa knows !—
In the voice that was raised to extinguish her woes
We ken not the potions and drugs which he blends,
But we're sure he's the power of enchanting his friends !”

Mr. Macaulay and Mr. Buxton accordingly arrived at Marden Park on the 8th of January ; and (in the words of the biographers of Mr. Wilberforce) “long and deep were their deliberations, how best to shape those measures which were to change the structure of society throughout the Western World.”*

It is pleasing to observe the spirit in which Mr. Buxton entered upon that session of Parliament, in which he was to commence his arduous Anti-slavery career. In his Commonplace book, after lamenting that “he was making no advance in spiritual things,” he proceeds : —

“Has not my time been squandered in unworthy objects for one who has but a short time to prepare himself for immortality ; for one who sees before him so much misery and so much vice, and who feels that labourers only are wanting to abate both the misery and the vice ? I am sure that we live in days in which a strenuous advocate of what is right is nearly certain of success. I have no reason for despondence. The Prison cause and the Criminal Law cause have both signally prospered. Grant, O Lord God, that I may not spend my money for that which is not bread, and my labour for that which satisfieth not ; but that I may choose for my first objects those which merit the dedication of all my powers, possessions, energies, and influence. Now, what are the objects thus deserving ? The salvation of my own soul and the service of God, promoting the salvation of others and their welfare.

“O for that spirit of devotion, of gratitude, of love to Christ, of indifference to the world, which the Lord gave me in my illness ! Let me then never pass a day without serious and repeated prayer — that is indispensable. Let me renounce the world as much as possible ; as much as possible acknowledge God in all my ways and words, and let me manfully resist every temptation which may assault and endanger my soul. O God, grant these things through thy blessed Son ! Next, how can I promote the welfare of others ? *In private*, by more seriousness

* Life of Wilberforce, vol. v. p. 160.

in family devotions, and by much more command of temper; by more industry; by more economy, sparing on my own pleasure and expending on God's service. *In public*, by attending to the Slave Trade, Slavery, Indian widows burning themselves*, the completion of those objects which have made some advance, viz., Criminal Law, Prisons, and Police. Send thy blessed Spirit, O great God, to my aid, and for my guidance, that, renouncing sin, I may walk worthy of my high vocation, in and through Jesus Christ my Lord."

To Mrs. Upcker, at Sheringham, near Cromer.

"London, Feb. 1823.

"My hands are entirely full with slaves, Indian widows, and the beer question; and with the Spanish ambassador, who is coming to dinner. How far, how very far, do I prefer Cromer and its neighbourhood to this big town! If I had my choice, and could exactly think it right to follow my own inclination, I should soon be disqualified for franking. As for fame, 'that last infirmity of noble minds,' it is not much of an infirmity of mine. To be sure I get but little of it, and that very little I care as little about; but then Indian widows and Slavery,—these are subjects worth any sacrifices: so no grumbling, in which I was going to indulge."

To John Henry North, Esq.

(After congratulating him warmly on his success at the Irish bar): —

"Feb. 13.

"Now get into Parliament, and be wise enough to come there absolutely independent. * * * Come into Parliament, and join

* He had been encouraged to hope that this question would be taken up by the ministers. He writes in 1822: "I am highly gratified to find that Government have some notion of taking up the subject of my Indian widows. That *would* be delightful."

These hopes proved to be unfounded; and on the 18th of June, 1823, he again brought the subject formally before the House, but without success. Soon afterwards he says, in a note to a friend, "I have been seeing the Governor of India this morning, about the annual immolation of thousands of poor widows. I do, from the bottom of my heart, wish that he, and such as he, felt as much about them as I do." From time to time he brought the subject before the House of Commons, remarking on the culpability of Government in continuing to countenance this atrocious custom. The result will be given in a subsequent part of this narrative.

us with all your force on such subjects as the abolition of the Slave Trade and of Slavery, the improvement of the Criminal Law and Prisons, the advancement of civilisation and Christianity in India. Make these and such as these your objects, and you will do vast service to mankind, to yourself, and to your friends. I do not mean, however, that these should prevent you from advancing in your own pursuits. I firmly believe that they will promote your welfare, taking welfare in the most worldly sense."

To the same, soon afterwards.

"I presume you have seen that the great subject of slavery has fallen into my hands. I count on you as an assured coadjutor. Will you accept a few pamphlets, by way of brief, and some for circulation among persons of influence! How heartily and continually I wish you were with me in the House! If it does not suit you, and if you do not suit it, I will give up all claims to the gift of prophecy."

To his eldest Son.

"My dear Boy,

"March 20.

"I was very glad to receive your letter. I hear that you are very attentive to dear mamma when you ride with her: that is right. * * * You may tell her that I did not speak last night; nobody replied to Wilberforce about the slaves, so I had no opportunity of saying anything. I am glad your gardens are so nice and neat and beautiful. I quite long to see you all, and find it rather hard to be kept away; but I am very busy, working hard for the poor slaves. How glad I shall be to hear you make a speech, when you are a man, in their favour!

"How are the pheasants, and the baby, and the rats, and the ponies, and all the other animals? Love to you all."

To Mrs. Buxton.

"March 22.

"Wednesday is the very earliest day I can be down with you, and it requires all my energy and determination to keep to that. This minute Wilmot, Under-Secretary of State, has been here, desiring me to call on Lord Bathurst on Wednesday relative to my Slave bill. * * * I am very earnest about Slavery; it seems to me that this is to be the main business of my life,—this and Hindoo widows; I am well contented and want no

other business. How odd the transitions of the human mind are!—how occupied mine was with pheasants and partridges till I left Norfolk! and I firmly believe I have not thought of them five times during my whole stay in London; but they certainly occupied too much of my time in the autumn. You cannot think how affectionate and loving Wilberforce was when I called on him yesterday. I think it odd that we should suit so well, having hardly one quality in common.”

Anti-slavery operations were now commenced with vigour, and for some time all went on well. Dr. Lushington, Lord Suffield, and several others, who had taken a prominent part in the reformation of Prison Discipline, now threw all their energies into this new undertaking. Early in March Mr. Wilberforce published his well-known “Appeal on behalf of the slaves.” At about the same time the Anti-Slavery Society was formed (Mr. Buxton being appointed a Vice-President), and the Committee engaged warmly in the task of collecting evidence and spreading information through the country. Public feeling was soon roused into activity, and petitions began to flow in; the lead was taken by the Society of Friends, and it was determined that the presentation of their appeal by the hands of Mr. Wilberforce should be the opening of the parliamentary campaign. He introduced it by saying that a similar petition which he had had the honour of presenting nearly thirty years before, had been the first effort against the kindred iniquity of the Slave Trade, and that in presenting this one “he considered that the first stone was laid of an edifice which would stand at some future period, an ornament to the land.”

Mr. Canning asked whether it was his intention to found any motion upon it? Mr. Wilberforce said, “It was not, but that such was the intention of an esteemed friend of his.”

Mr. Buxton then gave notice that on the 15th of May "he would submit a motion, that the House should take into consideration the state of slavery in the British Colonies." *

A few weeks before his motion came on, he communicated his intentions to the Government in the following letter addressed to Mr. Wilmot Horton for the perusal of Earl Bathurst : —

" My dear Sir, " Spring Gardens Hotel, April 15. 1823.

" A severe indisposition is, I think, some, though a poor, apology for not having performed my promise of writing to you.

" On the subject of the line I shall take about slavery, I must confess that my views are not absolutely determined, but such as they are I will state them. You will not, however, consider me absolutely and closely bound to them.

" The subject divides itself into two parts :—the condition of the existing slaves, and the condition of their children.

" With regard to the former, I wish the following improvements :—

" 1. That the slaves should be attached to the island, and, under modifications, to the soil. 2. That they cease to be chattels in the eye of the law. 3. That their testimony be received ' quantum valeat.' 4. That when any one lays his claim to the services of a negro, the *onus probandi* should rest on the claimant. 5. That obstructions to manumission should be removed. 6. That the provisions of the Spanish law (fixing by competent authority the value of the slave, and allowing him to purchase a day at a time) should be introduced. 7. That no governor, judge, or attorney-general should be a slave-owner. 8. That an effectual provision should be made for the religious instruction of the slaves. 9. That marriage should be sanctioned and enforced. 10. That the Sunday should be devoted by the slave to repose and religious instruction; and that other time should be allotted for the cultivation of his provision-grounds. 11. That some measures (but what I cannot say)

* Hansard, vol. viii. p. 627.

should be taken to restrain the authority of the master in punishing his slaves; and that some substitute be found for the driving system.

“These are the proposed qualifications of the existing slavery; but I am far more anxiously bent upon the extinction of slavery altogether, by rendering all the Negro children, born after a certain day, free: for them it will be necessary to provide education.

“God grant that his Majesty’s ministers may be disposed to accomplish these objects, or to permit others to accomplish them!”

In reply to an urgent request for delay, he again writes to Mr. Wilmot Horton:—

“May 10.

“Your letter really gives me great pain. I do not like to refuse anything you ask. I do not like to appear obstinate; but the opinion of all the persons with whom I act is strongly opposed to any delay, in which opinion I as strongly concur.

“The more the subject opens upon me, the more do I think that I should be answerable for a great crime if I consented to let the session slip away without proposing something. In short, pray excuse me for saying that on Wednesday I *will* bring forward my motion.”

On the 15th of May he wrote to Mrs. Upcher:—

“In five minutes I start for the House. I hope to begin at five o’clock. I am in good health, in excellent spirits, with a noble cause, and without fear. If I am only given a nimble tongue, we shall do.”

Then took place the first debate on the subject of Negro Slavery. Mr. Buxton began it by moving a resolution, “That the state of slavery is repugnant to the principles of the British Constitution and of the Christian Religion; and that it ought to be gradually abolished throughout the British Colonies with as much expedition as may be found consistent with a due regard to the well-being of the parties concerned.”

In his opening speech he plainly declared “The

object at which we aim is the *extinction of slavery*—nothing less than the extinction of slavery,—in nothing less than the whole of the British dominions: not, however, the rapid termination of that state; not the sudden emancipation of the negro; but such preparatory steps, such measures of precaution, as, by slow degrees, and in a course of years, first fitting and qualifying the slaves for the enjoyment of freedom, shall gently conduct us to the annihilation of slavery.”

When we observe these words, and the propositions embodied in Mr. Buxton's letter to Earl Bathurst, we cannot help feeling astonished that the Abolitionists should have been so long and so severely blamed for having rashly set the slaves free before they had fitted them for freedom; whereas, it was the Abolitionists who desired to approach emancipation by a long series of preparatory measures. It was the planters, as the sequel will prove, who rejected these preparatory measures, because they were meant to pave the way to ultimate emancipation.

The plan unfolded in Mr. Buxton's speech exactly corresponded with that contained in his letter to Mr. Wilmot Horton; but he especially urged the importance of emancipating all the children of the slaves; pointing out how surely, yet silently, the curse of slavery would thus die away. He proved that this had been done in other countries, without that noise and tumult with which his opponents predicted that it would be attended. This change was, in fact, at that very time silently proceeding in Ceylon, Bencoolen, and St. Helena.

“Now, one word,” he said, “as to the right of the master. There are persons whose notions of justice are so confused and confounded by slavery, as to suppose that the planter has some-

thing like an honest title to the person of the slave. We have been so long accustomed to talk of 'my slave,' and 'your slave,' and what he will fetch, if sold—that we are apt to imagine that he is really *yours or mine*, and that we have a substantial right to keep or sell him. Then let us just for a moment fathom this right. Here is a certain valuable commodity, and here are two claimants for it—a white man and a black man. Now, what is the commodity in dispute? The body of the black man. The white man says, 'it is mine,' and the black man, 'it is mine.' Now the question is, if every man had his own, to whom would the black body belong? The claim of the black man is just this—Nature gave it him—he holds it by the grant of God. That compound of bone and muscles is his, by the most irrefragable of all titles—a title which admits not, what every other species of title admits, a suspicion of violence, or fraud, or irregularity. Will any man say he came by his body in an illegal manner? Does any man suspect he played the knave and purloined his limbs? I do not mean to say that the negro is not a thief—but he must be a very subtle thief indeed if he stole even so much as his own little finger.

“At least you will admit this. The negro has a pretty good *primâ facie* claim to his own person. If any man thinks he has a better—the *onus probandi* rests with him. Then we come to the claim of the white man. What is the foundation of your right? It shall be the best that can be possibly conceived. You received him from your father—very good. Your father bought him from a neighbouring planter—very good. That planter bought him of a trader in the Kingston Slave Market, and that trader bought him of a man-merchant in Africa. So far you are quite safe! How did the man-merchant acquire him? *He stole him*, he kidnapped him. The very root of your claim is robbery, violence, inconceivable wickedness. If anything on earth was ever produced by evidence, it was proved by the Slave Trade Committee that the method of obtaining slaves in Africa was robbery, man-stealing, and murder. Your pure title rests on these sacred foundations. If your slave came direct from Africa, your right to his person is absolutely nothing. But your claim to the child born in Jamaica is (if I may use the expression) less still. The new-born infant has done, can have done, nothing to forfeit his right to freedom. And to talk

about rights, justice, equity, and law as connected with slavery, is downright nonsense. If we had no interest in the case, and we were only speaking of the conduct of another nation, we should all use the same language; and we should speak of slavery as we now speak of slave-trading — that is, we should call it rank, naked, flagrant, undisguised injustice.

“Now, sir, observe the moderation with which we proceed. We say, ‘Make no more slaves, desist from that iniquity; stop, abstain from an act, in itself as full of guilt, entailing in its consequences as much of misery, as any felony you can mention.’ We do not say, ‘Retrace your steps,’ but ‘stop.’ We do not say, ‘Make reparation for the wrong you have done;’ but ‘do no more wrong; go no further; complete what you have commenced; screw from your slave all that his bones and his muscles will yield you,—only stop there:’ and when every slave now living shall have found repose in the grave, then let it be said that the country is satiated with slavery, and has done with it for ever.”

An animated debate ensued, and Mr. Canning moved and carried certain amendments to Mr. Buxton's resolution; the most important of which was the insertion of the words, “with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private property.” Plausible as this addition seemed, the Anti-slavery party feared, and, as we shall see, but too justly, that it would afford the West Indians a handle on future occasions; but the discussion grew warmest when Mr. Canning brought forward his plan, that the proposed amelioration should be suggested to the colonial legislatures, but should only be enforced in the island of Trinidad, which being one of the crown colonies had no legislature of its own, with the further condition, however, that any unexpected resistance to the suggestions should be met by authority.

The following were the resolutions carried by Mr. Canning, to which we shall have frequent occasion to

refer in detailing the proceedings during the subsequent ten years.

1st. "That it is expedient to adopt effectual and decisive measures for ameliorating the condition of the slave population in his Majesty's colonies.

2nd. "That, through a determined and persevering, but at the same time judicious and temperate enforcement of such measures, this House looks forward to a progressive improvement in the character of the slave population, such as may prepare them for a participation in those civil rights and privileges which are enjoyed by other classes of his Majesty's subjects.

3rd. "That this House is anxious for the accomplishment of this purpose, at the earliest period that shall be compatible with the well-being of the slaves themselves, with the safety of the colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private property."

The debate concluded with a reply from Mr. Buxton, which is mentioned by Mr. Wilberforce as having been "short and, not sweet indeed, but excellent."* We will give one extract from it.† It was in answer to the argument that the danger arose, not from slavery itself, but from the discussion of slavery in the House.

"What then!" he exclaimed, "does the slave require any hint from us that he is a slave, and that slavery is of all conditions the most miserable? Why, sir, he hears this, he sees it; he feels it, too, in all around him. He sees his harsh, uncompensated labour; he hears the crack of the whip; he feels — he writhes under the lash. Does not this betray the secret?"

" ' This is no flattery; these are counsellors
That feelingly persuade him what he is.' "

He sees the mother of his children stripped naked before the gang of male negroes and flogged unmercifully; he sees his children sent to market, to be sold at the best price they will fetch; he sees in himself, not a man, but a thing — by West

* Life, vol. v. p. 178.

† Hansard's Debates. New Series, vol. ix. p. 358.

Indian law a chattel, an implement of husbandry, a machine to produce sugar, a beast of burden! And will any man tell me that the negro, with all this staring him in the face, flashing in his eyes, when he rises in the morning and when he goes to bed at night—never dreams that there is injustice in such treatment till he sits himself down to the perusal of an English newspaper, and there, to his astonishment, discovers that there are enthusiasts in England who from the bottom of their hearts deplore and abhor all negro slavery? There are such enthusiasts; I am one of them; and while we breathe we will never abandon the cause, till that thing — that chattel—is reinstated in all the privileges of man!”

Although the emancipation of children was lost, and even the alleviations of the slaves' condition were not to be compulsory, yet this debate was an important step gained; and Mr. Buxton's emphatic words in his opening speech were verified: — “A few minutes ago was commenced that process which will conclude, though not speedily, in the extinction of slavery throughout the British dominions.”

Mr. Buxton had various communications with Mr. Canning after the debate, and especially one long interview in company with Mr. Wilberforce and Mr. William Smith. On this important occasion, for which he had carefully prepared, he thoroughly ascertained Mr. Canning's opinions, on all points connected with the treatment, present and prospective, of colonial slaves. He then wrote down what had passed, and submitted the statement to Mr. Canning. The document strikingly displays the laborious accuracy and the sturdy determination to verify every point of his case, which characterised his conduct throughout the entire contest. Mr. Canning returned the paper with many autograph notes upon it, and Mr. Buxton therefore exactly knew what were the ministers' intentions at this period. Neither

party, however, were as yet aware of the difficulties of the case.

In accordance with the Resolutions of the House, at the end of May, Circular Letters were addressed by the Government to the various colonial authorities, recommending them to adopt the following reforms : —

1. To provide the means of religious instruction and Christian education for the slave population.
2. To put an end to markets and to labour on the Sunday, and, instead of Sunday, to allow the negroes equivalent time on other days for the cultivation of their provision grounds.
3. To protect the slaves by law in the acquisition and possession of property, and in its transmission by bequest or otherwise.
4. To legalise the marriages of slaves, and to protect them in the enjoyment of their connubial rights.
5. To prevent the separation of families by sale or otherwise.
6. To restrain generally the power, and to prevent the abuse, of arbitrary punishment at the will of the master.
7. To abolish the degrading corporal punishment of females.
8. To admit the testimony of slaves in courts of justice.
9. To prevent the seizure of slaves detached from the estate or plantation to which they belonged.
10. To remove all the existing obstructions to manumission, and to grant to the slave the power of redeeming himself and his wife and children at a fair price.
11. To abolish the use of the driving whip in the field, either as an emblem of authority, or as a stimulus to labour.
12. To establish Savings Banks for the use of the slaves.

Surely there was good ground for anticipating that the Colonial Assemblies would gladly listen to these temperate and salutary suggestions.

While anxiously awaiting the result, Mr. Buxton deliberately weighed the propriety of accepting an invitation from Lord Huntingdon to visit the West Indies in

person; but when this plan was referred to Mr. Wilberforce he gave a most decided opinion against it.*

Sir James Mackintosh had not hitherto taken any part in this question; and Mr. Buxton, being extremely anxious to engage his brilliant abilities and benevolent heart in its favour, addressed the following letter to him:—

“ My dear Sir James,

“ Cromer Hall, Nov. 30. 1823.

“ Your letter reached me just as I was leaving town. I much regret that I was thus prevented from talking with you on Criminal Law and Colonial Reform. The latter of these very much occupies my mind. I feel that a question of greater magnitude, affecting the happiness of a larger number of persons, has seldom been agitated; and I also feel that the crisis has arrived, in which we must either begin to ameliorate the condition of the slaves, and indeed to strike a blow at slavery, or in which slavery will be more firmly established than ever. I am, however, I must confess, alarmed, not at the reproach which is heaped on me, nor at the danger *said* to be produced in the West Indies by my motion. I disregard the former, and utterly disbelieve the latter: but I am alarmed at the prodigious strength of the West Indian party, and at the inability of the person to whom the cause of seven hundred thousand human beings is committed. How often have I wished that that good cause were blessed with the *full, hearty*, unreserved co-operation of yourself! * * * If I have to fight the battle without such aid, the cause of justice and humanity will undoubtedly suffer

* Mr. Buxton could not, as yet, have been aware of the reception which his proposed reforms would meet with in the West Indies, and the deadly hostility with which their author would be regarded, or he would not have entertained for an instant the idea of this visit. Capt. Studholme Hodgson, of the 19th Foot, in his work called “ Truths from the West Indies,” after mentioning “ the volumes of abuse lavished upon Sharpe, Wilberforce, Lushington, Stephen, Buxton, and Admiral Fleming,” continues:— “ This enmity seems to be more deadly towards the two latter than even that entertained for the others; and I will undertake to say, that were these two gentlemen to arrive in any island in the West Indies, and venture to move out unsurrounded by a guard of those grateful beings, who, night and day, implore blessings upon them, they would inevitably be torn to pieces by the Europeans, who would all vie as to who could most mangle their bodies.”— (P. 190.)

from the feebleness of its advocate. With that aid, and with that of Brougham, of whom we are sure, I doubt not that the sons of the present slaves will be raised to a state of villeinage, and their grandsons will be freemen. * * * Now I have written this I am ready to tear it to pieces, and to wonder at my own presumption in having written it. It shall however go. It is an entreaty for more than half a million of human beings who cannot supplicate for themselves, and against whom there are many who can canvass and are canvassing stoutly."

All his letters to Mr. Wilberforce have been destroyed; an unfortunate circumstance, for their number and interest are attested by those of Mr. Wilberforce to himself, which still remain. One of the latter, dated December 27. 1823, appears to be a reply to Mr. Buxton's account of the laborious study of documents which occupied him during that winter.

"My dear Friend, —Excellent! Excellent! I highly approve of your practice. Of course I approve with one understood condition, that you endeavour to bear the apostle's precept in mind,—'Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.' This will be rendering your slavery studies 'Exercises unto Godliness.' But otherwise I assure you I have found books steal away my heart from the *Sursum Corda* habit (spirituality of mind I mean, living among invisibles) more than worldly business. Excuse this hint; it is prompted by true friendship. You greatly disparage your faculties. If you require more time to imprint things in your mind, it is because you cut the letters deeply. Alas! I know from experience, that superficial engraving is too often and too easily effaced."

CHAPTER IX.

SLAVERY. 1823—1826.

EXCITEMENT IN THE WEST INDIES.—THE NEGROES REFUSE TO WORK.—SEVERE MEASURES.—DEATH OF THE MISSIONARY SMITH.—THE ABOLITIONISTS BITTERLY REPROACHED.—MR. BUXTON'S PLAN.—INTERVIEWS WITH MR. CANNING.—POPULAR CLAMOURS.—THE GOVERNMENT DRAWS BACK.—ANXIETIES AND DOUBTS.—LETTER FROM MR. J. J. GURNEY.—THE DEBATE.—THE GOVERNMENT GIVES WAY.—MR. BUXTON ATTACKS THEM.—ENCOURAGEMENTS FROM MR. WILBERFORCE.—MR. BROUGHAM'S SPEECH ON SMITH'S CASE.—ITS EFFECT ON THE COUNTRY.—MR. WILBERFORCE RETIRES.—THE SMALL NUMBER OF ABOLITIONISTS IN PARLIAMENT.—DR. LUSHINGTON.—MR. MACAULAY.—MR. BUXTON'S POLICY.—FREE PEOPLE OF COLOUR.—TREATMENT OF MR. SHREWSBURY.—DEBATE.—DELIBERATIONS.—THE LONDON PETITION.—MR. DENMAN'S MOTION.—A YEAR'S PAUSE.

THE news of Mr. Buxton's attack on what the planters considered to be their just rights, and of the acquiescence of the Government in his principles, were received in the West Indies with the most vehement indignation.* For some weeks after the arrival of the despatches, not the slightest restraint seems to have been put on the violence of their rage, which drove them to the wildest designs. Thoughts were openly entertained of resisting the innovations of the Government by force of arms. It was even proposed to throw off the yoke of the mother country, and place themselves under the protection of America. They could find no language sufficiently bitter to express their rancour †; and the colo-

* To the honour, be it said, of the Islands of Grenada, St. Vincent's and St. Christopher's, they did not join in the outcry raised by the generality of the West Indian Islands.

† The following extract from the Jamaica Journal is a specimen of the

nial legislatures unanimously refused submission to the recommendations of the Government.

When the Order in Council reached Demerara, the authorities of the colony endeavoured to conceal the intelligence from the black population. Their precautions were worse than useless; exaggerated rumours soon spread abroad. The negroes fancied that "the great King of England" had set them free, and that the planters had suppressed his edict; and under this impression the slaves on several estates refused to work. Compulsion was resorted to—they resisted, and commenced outrages on the property and persons of the whites. Martial law was proclaimed, and the soldiers called out.

Destitute alike of organisation, of leaders, and of arms, the slaves were at once reduced to subjection. In performing this duty not one soldier was killed; but pressed down and running over was the measure of vengeance dealt to the unhappy negroes.

"It was deemed fitting," said Mr. Brougham, "to make tremendous examples of them. Considerably above a hundred fell in the field, where *they* did not succeed in putting one soldier to death. A number of the prisoners, also, it is said, were hastily drawn out at the close of the affray and shot. How many in the whole have since perished by sentences of the court does not appear, but by the end of September forty-seven had been executed. A more horrid tale of blood yet remains to be told. Within the short space of a week ten were torn in pieces by the lash; some of these had been condemned to six

abuse lavished upon Parliament, Mr. Canning, Earl Bathurst, and "those canting hypocritical rascals," the Abolitionists. (No. 11, Saturday, June 28. 1823) . . . "We will pray the Imperial Parliament to amend their origin, which is bribery; to cleanse their consciences, which are corrupt; to throw off their disguise, which is hypocrisy; to break with their false allies, who are the saints; and, finally, to banish from among them all the purchased rogues, who are three-fourths of their number."

or seven hundred lashes; five to one thousand each; of which inhuman torture one had received the whole, and two almost the whole at once.”*

The colonists were not satisfied by the severity with which the rebel negroes had been visited. For some time the attention of religious men in England had been drawn to the wretched ignorance and depravity of the lower orders in our colonial islands. Various denominations of Christians had sent out missionaries to instruct them, and the Independents and Wesleyans had distinguished themselves by their Christian zeal. It was no path of flowers which these missionaries had chosen. The colonists were violently opposed to change; and with the usual feelings of despotic masters, they could not endure the idea of allowing their slaves to be educated; yet, in the face of danger and persecution, the missionaries persevered, and many of the negroes were brought to the knowledge of religion. The planters had tried every means to stop this “nuisance;” and when the rebellion broke out, they resolved to fix it upon the Christian teachers of the negroes.

The particulars of “Smith’s case,” afterwards so ably treated by Mr. Brougham, need not here be dwelt on. Suffice it to say, that he was an Independent missionary; was tried in a manner not only unjust, but absolutely illegal, before a court-martial of militia officers, and condemned to be hanged; but his treatment in prison destroyed his previously failing health, and he died in his dungeon in time to anticipate the executioner.†

* Hansard’s Debates New Series, vol. xi. p. 995.

† While Smith was dying in his prison (which is described as a place only suited to purposes of torture), he was compelled by his persecutors to draw a bill upon the funds of the London Missionary Society, in order to defray the expenses of his so-called trial. Many years afterwards the secretary of that Society, in arranging some old papers, met with this bill. In

The news of the ferment among the colonists, with the rapidly succeeding intelligence of the revolt of the negroes, of their overthrow, and of the severities inflicted upon them and upon their teachers, soon reached England. The disappointment and grief of the leading members of the anti-slavery party were great indeed; their lukewarm partisans left them at once, and joined in the loud outcry which arose against them. They were denounced as the causes of the disaffections of the colonists and the disorders among the slaves. The people at large, in looking at the confusions of the colonies, did not remember how gentle a remedy for the admitted evil of slavery was the one proposed by Mr. Buxton; that all parties in England had agreed, with some modifications, as to its prudence; and that only to the wilfulness and prejudice of the colonists were these unhappy results to be ascribed. But the angry reproaches which rang in Mr. Buxton's ears were as nothing when compared with the mortification he experienced on discovering that the Government, appalled by the consequences of the steps which they had taken, and apparently as regardless of their own dignity as of the interests of their black subjects, were determined to forfeit the pledge which Mr. Canning had given — that, if obedience were not voluntarily rendered by the colonial legislatures, it should be enforced. Rumours to this effect soon spread abroad; but they were of so indefinite a character, that the Abolitionists could not tell what steps the Government proposed to take, nor what

looking at it, his attention was drawn to one corner of the sheet, and, on examining it more carefully, he found, written in a minute hand, the reference "2 Cor. iv. 8, 9." on turning to which he found the text, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed, we are perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."