

" Newmarket, Sept. 20.

" Here I am, my dear Harry, and I will make use of my pen while tea is brewing. I have had a pleasant journey. To be sure I could not read, for it grew dark about the time we got to Pearson's; but though I could not read out of a book, I read all the better a sermon out of the stars; and a noble sermon it was, beginning—' The heavens declare the glory of God; ' and it ended thus, ' What is man, that thou art mindful of him? ' One part of the sermon I recollect:—' Vanity, vanity, says the preacher, *all* is vanity.—Nay, there, Solomon, with all your wisdom, you are wrong! It may be vanity to pursue pleasure, to gratify appetite, or to hunt after renown. It may be vanity to buy fine houses, preserve pheasants, plant trees, acquire an estate with the hills from the Lighthouse to Weybourne for a boundary; but it is *not* vanity, it is excellent good sense, to serve with the heart and soul, and might and main, the Master and Creator of those heavens: it is *not* vanity to conquer evil passions, and stifle unholy repinings: it is *not* vanity, to be patient and submissive, gentle and cheerful, during a long and weary season of trial: it is *not* vanity, in the midst of trials and privations, to spread around a loving and a holy influence, so that the sufferer becomes the teacher and the comforter; comforting us and teaching us that unsafe we cannot be, while we are in the arms of a most merciful and tender Father.' So said the preacher to whom I was listening, and many other things he said which I forget at this moment, but I recollect he wound up one paragraph thus—' Look at that cluster of stars, conceive the power which framed, and the wisdom which guides them, and then say, if you can,— I am able to improve upon His dispensations; I can change His decrees for the better; not His will, but mine be done! ' But the tea is getting cold, so I will say no more about the sermon, except that the preacher drew a most striking and lucid likeness of Northrepps, painting to the life each member of the family; so graphic were his touches, that I never felt more strongly what a blessing it is to belong to it. When we had done with the Hall, he sketched the Cottage, and in the gravest manner possible gave a sly hit or two, which made me smile in the midst of my approval. But now I must conclude. May the God of hope preserve you in all peace; help, -cheer, enliven, strengthen you, and gladden

you with the consolations which come from Jesus Christ our Lord ! Good night, dear Harry, and all at Northrepps."

The Rev. Charles Simeon to T. Fowell Buxton, Esq.

" My dear Sir,

" November 4.

" I beg leave to thank you for a most munificent present of game. It has come most welcome in point of time, but doubly welcome as a remembrance from you, for whom I have so long entertained a most affectionate regard. I may even say, that the very affliction which you are now suffering greatly endears it to me. Sympathy under such circumstances is both heightened and refined ; because I am made to feel, that, whilst your domestic trouble might well engross your every thought, you can yet extend to a distant friend your kindness in a matter of such minor importance. In truth, it is by the furnace that Jehovah usually purges away our dross ; and if we come out of it purified, we have reason to acknowledge our afflictions as blessings in disguise. To you, who during the sitting of Parliament are so much occupied with public affairs, it is a peculiar blessing to hear the ' still small voice ' of God at home, and to have a season for self-examination, and for communion, deep communion with your own heart ; and in seeing death making its inroads upon your dearest relatives, you are brought, I doubt not, to contemplate its gradual approach to yourself, and, I trust, to be thankful that your time has been protracted to the present hour, that you may be more fully prepared to meet its stroke. Above all, I rejoice to hear of the state of your son's mind. Yes ; let him only commit himself into the Saviour's hands, and his joy shall indeed be both intense and lasting ! With my affectionate regards to him and Mrs. Buxton,

" I remain, most truly yours,

" CHARLES SIMEON."

While Mr. Buxton most acutely felt the sorrow of this calamity, he was no less alive to the consolations afforded him. " It is most painful," he said to a friend one day on leaving the sick room, " it is most painful, and yet most full of comfort. As painful as it can be, and as comfortable as it can be." The same spirit breathes in a letter to Dr. Philip at Cape Town.

" Northrepps Hall, November 10. 1830.

" My dear Friend,

" I must not let my wife's and daughter's letters go without a line to tell you that I have very sincerely sympathised with you in the trials to which you have been exposed. I am sure your stout spirit needs not encouragement; but it may be a satisfaction to you to know that your friends on this side of the water look upon you as convicted of a crime—of putting an end to the slavery of the Hottentots. That is your real offence; for this the friends of slavery meditate your ruin: but they will find themselves mistaken. We, too, lay our claim to a share of that guilt, and we shall pay the penalty.*

" I think you need not trouble yourself at all about the fine or the costs; and as for shame and disgrace, &c., I would take a thousand times as much to have written a book which has done so much good, and think it a capital bargain. Pray take ample vengeance on the enemy by exposing all kinds of oppression. Do twice as much as you meditated.

'Tu ne cede malis, sed contrà audentior ito'

" We are, as you will see by the newspapers, in a state of convulsion and alarm: I believe it to be imaginary, and that the only real danger arises from our own fears.

" Perhaps domestic griefs make me insensible to those of a public nature. My poor boy is at the gates of death. To-day we took the Sacrament together. I think it hardly possible for any father to sustain a greater loss; but then no father can have greater consolation. As a little child leans upon his mother, so our dear Harry leans upon his Saviour. He knows the event which is coming, and is prepared to meet it with entire serenity. He is truly 'walking through the valley of the shadow of death' and, as truly, 'he fears no evil.' Excuse me for saying so much on a subject which engrosses all our thoughts. You be will happy to hear that his poor mother, notwithstanding unceasing nursing, confinement, and anxiety, is tolerably well; a great mercy, and one among a multitude which are granted to us.

* Dr. Philip has been fined by a court at the Cape for some of his expressions in the "Researches," which were condemned as libellous of the colony.

"Our slavery concerns go on well ; the religious public has, at last, taken the field. The West Indians have done us good service. They have of late flogged slaves in Jamaica for praying, and imprisoned the missionaries, and they have given the nation to understand that preaching and praying are offences not to be tolerated in a slave colony. That is right — it exhibits slavery in its true colours — it enforces your doctrine, that, if you wish to teach religion to slaves, the first thing is, to put down slavery.

"I have 100, perhaps 150 petitions waiting for me in London, but I do not leave home at present. When another election arrives, and if we have a change of ministry, which may come soon, the subject will be more thought of than it has been : but I must go to my afflicted wife. May God be merciful to you and bless you, and lift up the light of His countenance upon you.

"Your sincere and affectionate friend,
"THOMAS FOWELL BUXTON."

Under every mitigation which intense parental solicitude could supply, the invalid sank peacefully, and died in the 17th year of his age, on the 18th of November. He was buried in a retired spot within the ruined chancel of Overstrand Church. Upon a tablet is inscribed his name, with that of his brother and his four young sisters, who had died previously ; and the following lines written by his father : —

"Full of bright promise, youthful, courteous, brave ;
Grace in the form, mind beaming from the eye ;
All that a mother's fondest wish could crave
Were lent awhile by Heav'n, and here they lie.

"Here lies the wreck, the spirit wings her flight,—
The ransom'd spirit, to the realms above ;
Ranges unfetter'd through the fields of light ;
Rests in the bosom of eternal love ;

"Beholds the unnumber'd host of angel powers,
Who, round Jehoval's throne, their anthems sing,
And joins that kindred band, those lovely flow'rs,
Cut down and wither'd in their early spring.

“Scenes by no tear disturb’d, no sin defl’d,
 Scenes nor by heart conceiv’d, nor tongue confess’d,
 Unveil’d to thee, dear spirit of our child ;—
 And we are comforted, for thou art bless’d.”

Two papers written by Mr. Buxton in the course of the ensuing winter may conclude this history.

“Northrepps, January 9. 1831.

“The Lord Jesus Christ be with my spirit ; grace be with me. This is my prayer for the year. May Christ be with me and mine — may the Holy Spirit of God be my constant guide, guardian, comforter, and teacher. Thou knowest, O Lord, what depths of sorrow and bitter anxiety the last year has produced. Thou knowest that we have gone mourning all the year long, and yet have we to thank thee for some of the choicest mercies we ever received. We have parted with a beloved child, who was all that our hearts could desire ; but if he left our arms, he was received in thine ; no doubt hangs over his blessedness, and I thank thee for this. My heart is grateful for the certainty that he is now in heaven. Thanks that he was spared extreme pain ; thanks that he was not wearied out by his sufferings ; thanks that he descended to the grave with so many glorious manifestations of thy love ! And, O Lord, may it be my unceasing desire and aim to reach the same blessed haven : may it be the province of thy Spirit to deliver me from all that might obstruct my salvation. May I view sin with detestation, because it is offensive to thee, my gracious Lord ; and again with detestation, because that, and that alone, can mar my prospects of going where my dearest Harry is gone before. Teach me then, O Lord, to subdue the flesh, to resist the devil, to live wholly to my God ; and may that blessed Saviour who came into the world to save sinners, redeem and ransom one who pretends to no grounds of hope, who rejects all pleas of safety except through the merits of that same Saviour Jesus Christ.”

“Northrepps, January 30. 1831.

“I feel this morning more than usual dejection, partly occasioned perhaps by the prospect of leaving this quiet place on Tuesday next, and plunging once more into the distracting cares and hurries of Parliament and business ; but still more by a most painful picture which suddenly burst upon me yesterday.

I took the boys, Edward, Edmund, and the two Upchers, to shoot on the Warren hills opposite the coast. The ground was covered with snow, the sea was dark and fretful. I went along the lower side, and turned up one of the most distant hillocks, and there I placed myself. And then in a moment a picture burst upon me, which made this one of the most melancholy moments of the last melancholy year. On that same hillock, about the same day two years back, I stood. Nature seemed as if she had not changed. The same surface of white beneath my feet, the sea bearing the same blackening aspect, the game-keepers and dogs in the same hollow, and the boys exhibiting the same eagerness ; all was the same with one sorrowful exception. Dearest Harry was nearest to me on the former occasion ; his quick eye perceived a wild duck sailing near the sea, and we observed it alighting in a pond near the farm below us. I sent him, full of life and alacrity as he was, to secure the bird, while I stood and watched his manœuvres to get within shot unobserved. Then again his exulting return with the bird in his hand, and the pleasure I felt at his pleasure—and now I could see nothing but the churchyard where his bones repose. Dear fellow ! how large a portion of my hope and joy lies there : how has the world changed with me since that joyful hour ! But there is this comfort, if we are left to sad recollections, he is gone to eternal security and peace.

CHAPTER XVI.

SLAVERY. 1830.

THE PUBLIC BEGINS TO AROUSE ITSELF.—INCREASING POPULARITY OF THE SUBJECT.—GRADUAL CHANGE IN THE VIEWS OF THE LEADERS.—MITIGATING MEASURES DESPAIRED OF.—DETERMINATION TO PUT DOWN SLAVERY THOROUGHLY AND AT ONCE.—SPIRITED MEETINGS IN LONDON AND EDINBURGH.—THE GOVERNMENT OUTSTRIPPED BY THE ABOLITIONISTS.—MR. BUXTON'S APPEAL TO THE ELECTORS.—THE CRUELTY OF SLAVERY IN ITS MILDEST FORM.

DURING the last three years the leaders of the Anti-slavery movement had been forced into comparative repose; but the movement itself went on. The nation was turning its attention more and more to the question of slavery; inquiring into its true nature, and receiving impressions from the facts and arguments brought forward in the "Anti-slavery Reporter," and other publications.

A few years before, the idea of emancipation had been odious both to Parliament and to the people. "If," said Mr. Buxton, in 1827, "a man had a large share of reputation, he would lose the greater part of it by espousing the cause of the slaves; if he had a moderate share he would lose all: and that is my case." At that time he wrote to Mr. Macaulay:—

"God grant you, my dear friend, good health and good spirits; I, like you, have my share of slander. To-day I have received a letter from Joseph John Gurney, telling me the reports he has heard against me, and from our friends too! No matter; if slander against individuals is the method our adversaries take of justifying slavery, they will have hard work in inventing lies before they succeed in silencing us."

But at the period we have reached, although in some quarters a clamorous spirit of opposition still prevailed, yet the Anti-slavery feeling had been steadily making way. The planters, in fact, by their invincible obstinacy, had chilled the sympathy with which many had been inclined to regard them. They had all along been playing a losing game. The Government would gladly have left the colonial legislatures to work out for themselves the needful reforms in their system; they had hurled back the quiet suggestions of the Government with every expression of defiance and contempt; they had punished the rebel negroes with a severity which shocked every feeling of humanity; they had condemned Smith to the gallows, and thus turned the Independents against them; they forced Shrewsbury to fly for his life, and the Wesleyans were aroused; the Baptist chapels were razed to the ground, and the Baptists became their enemies.

Mr. Buxton had early foreseen this result. In his speech on the persecutions of Mr. Shrewsbury, he exclaimed,—

“ Proceed, then, faster and faster; you are doing our work; you are accelerating the downfall of slavery. A few more such triumphs, a few more such speaking testimonies to the merits of your system, and the people of England with one heart will abhor it, and with one voice will dissolve it.”

While they were thus exasperating one class after another, the planters stimulated the exertions of their opponents by the vehement abuse which they poured out upon them. To their ceaseless charges of falsehood and hypocrisy, the Abolitionists replied by laying bare first one and then another feature of the system; and thus a series of impressions was made upon the public mind, which at length wrought a full conviction.

In 1830, these views which had been slowly expanding, suddenly put on a new and more definite form.

Like all who begin to climb towards great objects of attainment, Mr. Buxton had at first taken the lower eminences in the path before him to be the highest it would reach. At first he had not questioned that emancipation must be a disastrous boon to the blacks, unless previously trained to enjoy it. Thus in his opening speech, in 1823, he expressly said :—

“ The object at which we aim is the extinction of slavery. Not, however, the rapid termination of that state — not the sudden emancipation of the negro, but such preparatory steps, such precautionary measures, as by slow degrees, and in the course of years, first fitting and qualifying the slave for the enjoyment of freedom, shall gently conduct us to the annihilation of slavery.”

But this declaration had been made seven years before, when, to use his own words, “ We did not know, as we now do, that all attempts at gradual abolition are utterly wild and visionary.”*

Since that time the conduct of the colonists had plainly shown that there was no hope of the negroes being raised to a fitness for liberty *while they were still slaves*. This could not be done, at any rate, without the hearty co-operation of the planters ; and all co-operation the planters had refused. Nay, even had they turned to the work of improving their human property, for the sake of having it taken from them, it may yet be questioned whether the inherent nature of the system would not have forbidden success. Either you must have compulsion, fruitful in abuses, and debasing to character, or you must have the natural and wholesome inducement of wages.

“ Slavery,” said Mr. Buxton, upon one occasion †, “ is labour

* *Mirror of Parliament*, May 30 1833. † *Hansard*, vol. xiii. p. 44.

extorted by force. Wages, the natural motive, are not given, but their place is supplied with the whip. In this House discussions frequently take place as to what slavery is, and what it is not; but one thing it is by the confession of all men—it is labour extorted by force. * * * Under the most mitigated system, slavery is still labour obtained by force; and, if by force, I know not how it is possible to stop short of that degree of force which is necessary to extort involuntary exertion. A motive there must be, and it comes at last to this: inducement or compulsion; wages or the whip."

The evil, then, being, from its very nature, incapable of much amelioration, and the planters thus set against all reform, it was time for the Anti-slavery leaders to relinquish the hope of making mitigation the first step to freedom. Not soon, nor without a struggle, was that hope given up; so plausible does the proposition seem, that "no people ought to be free till they are fit to use their freedom." "Yet this maxim," says a brilliant writer of our day, "is worthy of the fool in the old story, who resolved not to go into the water till he had learnt to swim. If men are to wait for liberty till they become wise and good in slavery, they may indeed wait for ever!"*

What, then, was to be done? Should things be left as they were? To Mr. Buxton the answer was plain. He held it to be sheer robbery for one man to hold in bondage the person of another; he thought it a crime in itself; he knew that its offspring was wrong and wickedness, and he could not shrink from the risk of doing it away.

The conviction that slavery could not be slowly modified, with a view to its ultimate extinction, but must be rooted out, and that speedily, wrought a thorough

* Macaulay's Essays, vol. 1. p. 42 "Milton."

change in the policy of the Anti-slavery leaders. They had been lopping the branches ; they now struck at the root. In 1823 they had sought to better the slave's condition, by lightening some of his burdens. In 1824, the plan was mooted for the purchase, emancipation, and apprenticeship of the negro children. The next three years were spent in discussions on Smith's death and the treatment of the rebel slaves; on the oppression of the free people of colour; on the non-admission of negro evidence; on Shrewsbury's banishment, and the destruction of his chapel. During 1828, 1829, and 1830, the Government had been still vainly striving to induce the colonial legislatures to begin the work of amelioration with their own hands. But a more stirring time was at hand. The Abolitionist party was grown too strong and zealous to shrink from any measures which its leaders might bring forward. In their minds bolder views had ripened, and needed only to be once spoken out in words, to become principles of action. In May, 1830, a crowded meeting assembled in Freemasons' Hall, with Mr. Wilberforce in the chair. The first resolution, moved by Mr. Buxton, expressed that "no proper or practicable means should be left unattempted for effecting at the earliest period the entire abolition of slavery throughout the British dominions." It was seconded by Lord Milton (now Earl Fitzwilliam), who had throughout supported the cause with all the weight of his station and character, though by so doing he had placed himself in opposition to the administration of which his father was a member. Other speeches and resolutions followed in the same strain, till at length Mr. Pownall rose to declare in a few vigorous words, that temporising measures ought at once to be abandoned. "The time," said he, "is come when we should speak out, and speak boldly, our deter-

mination—that slavery shall exist *no longer*.” These words embodied the feeling which already pervaded the Anti-slavery party, and from this time immediate emancipation became its avowed object.

A meeting held in Edinburgh in the course of the same year, gave a further impulse to public feeling. After an eloquent address from Mr. (afterwards Lord) Jeffrey, urging the meeting to aim at nothing short of “abolishing slavery at the earliest practicable period,” Dr. Andrew Thomson broke in with a vehement protest against any further pretexts for delay, exclaiming, “We ought to tell the legislature, plainly and strongly, that no man has a right to property in man,—that there are 800,000 individuals sighing in bondage, under the intolerable evils of West Indian slavery, who have as good a right to be free as we ourselves have,—that they ought to be free, and that they *must* be made free!”

These bold expressions excited such contending feelings, that the meeting broke up in confusion, but only to reassemble a few days later, when a most eloquent speech having been made by Dr. A. Thomson, a petition for immediate emancipation was adopted, to which 22,000 signatures were rapidly subscribed.

But while the Abolitionists were for pushing forwards, and doing what must be done, at once, the Government had no desire to accelerate its pace. It was still determined to plod on in the old track; its patience had not as yet been wearied out by the utter hopelessness of the task it had undertaken. It still hoped that the planters might be won over by gentle treatment. No doubt, they had baffled its plans, they had trampled under foot its suggestions; but it was still fain to humour their prejudices and put trust in their good intentions. If patience be a virtue, then was the Administration most

virtuous; with such fortitude did they submit to the sufferings of the slaves.

As the Government was thus standing still, while the Anti-slavery party was moving onwards, there could not but arise a breach between them; and accordingly from this time we find Mr. Buxton, not so much wrestling with the West Indians, as with the Government itself, and spurring it on to adopt decisive measures.

During the session of 1830, nothing of moment was effected, except that, on the 13th of July, Mr. Brougham obtained a large minority in favour of ultimate abolition. On the 20th of the same month, three days before Parliament was prorogued, Mr. Buxton, in his place in the House, made an earnest appeal to the electors throughout the kingdom, repeating the statement made by Canning in 1823, that "the first step towards emancipation should be the abolition of the practice of flogging females." He showed that even this first step had not yet been taken; a decision having recently been made by a large majority in the Jamaica House of Assembly, that females should continue to be flogged indecently*; and he proved in detail that each of the other abuses, which in 1823 it had been proposed to mitigate, still existed in the colonies, unchecked and unaltered.

As to the existence and extent of these abuses, a few words may not be out of place, for many still believe, that although slavery was a barbarous institution, which it was well to abolish, yet that the negroes were, in the main, both kindly treated and happy. This impression has been deepened by the accounts given by some casual visitors of the West Indies, who, seeing little but the surface of things, gave no heed to the horrors that

* *Mirror of Parliament, July 20. 1830.*

lurked below.* For instance, it was repeatedly asserted that the whip was a mere "emblem of authority," and that the cases of its cruel employment were either fictitious, or at least extremely rare.

With regard to the use of the whip, some official statistics remain, which show it to have been no imaginary evil. But before producing them, it may be well to observe, that the lash was, after all, but one of many hardships which the slave endured. His scanty supply of food and clothing was a source of constant and bitter suffering; all his domestic ties were utterly dissolved; every hindrance was thrown in the way of his education; his religious teachers were persecuted; his day of rest encroached on; every prospect of obtaining civil rights was taken away; however grievous the injury inflicted, to obtain redress was extremely difficult, if not impossible†; his hopes of emancipation were opposed by the greatest obstacles, and the slightest offences subjected him to the severest punishments, to the stocks, to the prison, to the whip.

But of all his grievances, none was greater than the intense severity of his toil. In Jamaica, for example, the amount of field labour allotted by law was nineteen hours a day during crop time, and fourteen and a half during the remainder of the year (with intervals of rest amounting to two hours and a half per diem). This work had to be done, it must be remembered, under an

* There were abundance of eye-witnesses on the other side also. It was remarkable that some of the most energetic of the anti-slavery leaders (for example, Mr. Stephen and Mr. Macaulay) had both studied slavery, and had learned to abhor it, from dwelling under its shadow for years.

† In the four crown colonies Protectors of the slaves had been appointed. But the negroes were often flogged by these very Protectors, if they could not substantiate a charge made against a white man. Against this iniquity Sir George Murray set his face with his usual decision and vigour. (See "Protectors' Reports.")

almost vertical sun ; and the mode of its performance is thus described : — “ The slaves were divided into gangs of from thirty to fifty men, generally selected of a nearly equal degree of strength, but many were often weak or diseased. They were placed in a line in the field, with drivers (armed with the whip) at equal distances ; and were obliged to maintain that line throughout the day, so that those who were not so strong as the others, were literally flogged up by the drivers. The motion of the line was rapid and constant.”

These evils were general and were not denied. For the most part, indeed, they were authorised by the colonial laws, but the flogging, of which the Anti-slavery party complained, was made light of by their antagonists, as if it were a mere chimera. “ How,” asked the West Indian leaders, “ will the country believe that the proprietors of colonial property — men of honour, humanity, and prudence — would suffer their negroes to be torn to pieces by the lash ? ”*

It was, indeed, suggested in reply, that these proprietors were non-resident,—that they employed agents, and the agents employed drivers, whose interest it was to wring the most work each year from the muscles of the slave, and to spend as little as possible upon him,—though to the ultimate ruin of the estate.†

* In 1823, Mr. C. Ellis, afterwards Lord Seaford (himself a West Indian planter), stated his conviction that “ the whip was generally placed in the hands of the drivers more as a badge of authority than as an instrument of coercion,” and was considered “ only as a symbol of office ; ” and this opinion was held in all sincerity by many others of the West Indian proprietors.—(See Hansard, May 1823.)

† The following is an extract from “ Truths from the West Indies,” by Captain S. Hodgson, of the 19th Infantry .—“ There are few *bond fide* proprietors resident on the spot ; the greater part of the estates are mortgaged to nearly their full value, and are superintended by some of the mortgagees or their agents. These people have no idea beyond grinding out of the property the largest possible sum in the shortest possible period, per-

But we have to deal, not with speculations, but with plain facts.

The colonies of Demerara, Berbice, Trinidad, and St. Lucia were, as it is termed, "Crown Colonies," and, as such, were under the direct control of the Colonial Office at home; whereas in the other islands the planters were governed by Assemblies of their own. In those four colonies alone had the ameliorations been enforced which the other islands had spurned to receive. Here alone had the Government placed protectors of the slaves, at whose hands, when wronged, they could seek redress; and, among other measures of precaution, returns were required of the punishments inflicted by the magistrates.* It was, then, in the four Crown Colonies that slavery existed in its mildest form; and yet, upon the oath of the planters themselves, there were registered in these four colonies, in the two years 1828-9, 68,921 punishments, of which 25,094 were registered as inflicted upon females.†

Now as the law allowed twenty-five stripes to one punishment, which limit was frequently passed ‡, we cannot (taking it at twenty stripes to a punishment) estimate the total amount of stripes inflicted during 1828-9 in those four colonies at less than *one million three hundred and fifty thousand.*

flectly indifferent to the eventual ruin they must entail by the over-working of the soil; and having no sympathy for the slaves, whom they literally regard as cattle, they think alone of the present gain to themselves. Where the proprietor resides, I have generally observed him kind, and his people happy and contented."

* It is obvious that a large number of punishments would remain unregistered, through the unwillingness of their inflictors to record them: thus, in the Report of the Protector of Slaves in Demerara, we find, in 1829, "Mary Lowe *convicted* of tying up first a little girl, and then a little boy, by the wrists, the one for five, the other for nine hours, and flogging them 'unmercifully;' and of other cruelties" Yet her estate gave in no returns of punishment.—(See Parliamentary Returns)

† See Protectors' Reports. Parliamentary Papers.

‡ Ib.

CHAPTER XVII.

SLAVERY. 1831.

RELIGIOUS MEDITATIONS.—THE DUKE'S DECLARATION.—CHANGE OF MINISTRY.—THE WHIG GOVERNMENT DOES NOT TAKE UP THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.—QUAKERS' PETITION.—DECREASE OF THE SLAVE POPULATION.—DEBATE.—THE GOVERNMENT STILL TRIES TO LEAD THE COLONISTS TO ADOPT MITIGATING MEASURES.—PARLIAMENT DISSOLVED.—LETTER FROM BELLFIELD.—LETTER TO A SON AT COLLEGE.—DINNER AT THE BREWERY.—ANECDOTES.—REFLECTIONS.—DEATH OF MR. NORTH.—CORRESPONDENCE.

THE day before the commencement of the session of 1831, Mr. Buxton thus implores help and guidance from on high:—

“January 30. 1831.

“ Give me, O Lord, thy help, thy present, and evident, and all-sufficient help, in pleading the cause of the slave. Let the light of thy countenance shine upon me. Give me wisdom to select the proper course, and courage to pursue it, and ability to perform my part; and turn the hearts of the powerful, so that they may be prone to feel for, and prompt to help, those whose bodies and whose souls are in slavery. ‘ If ye ask anything in my name,’ said our Saviour, ‘ I will do it.’ In His prevailing name, and for His merits, do this, O Lord God! * * * But whatever may be thy will in my secular concerns, give me patience, faith, thankfulness, confidence; a sense of thy Divine Majesty, of the benignity of Christ, a love for thy Scriptures, a love of prayer, and a heart firmly fixed on immortality. May I remember that, ere the year closes, I may be snatched away and hurried before thy judgment-seat! Be with me, then, in health and in sickness, in life and in death, in events prosperous and adverse, in my intercourse with my family, in my public duties, in my study. Be thou my strong habitation to which I may continually resort. Be with me and mine every day and every hour during this year.”

The recent political changes might have seemed to

augur well for the cause of emancipation. The Duke of Wellington's celebrated declaration against Reform had broken up his ministry. That of Earl Grey had succeeded, in which the post of Lord Chancellor was filled by Lord Brougham.

Yet Dr. Lushington writes,—

"January, 1831.

" For the sake of all the great interests of humanity, I trust that you may now resume your public duties. I am of opinion that this is a fearful crisis for many of the great objects you have at heart. Without great exertion both slavery and capital punishment will be almost unaltered. I have but little confidence in the merely voluntary good-will of the new Government, and feel strongly the necessity that they should be taught that the voice of the people will not admit of dilatory or half measures."

Again, soon afterwards —

" The prospect is not encouraging, so far as relates to the Government, but with you, who have cast your lot in these troubled waters, and will never fall back, this can only be a reason for greater and more strenuous exertion. For myself, I must add, that though I am grievously disappointed with them, yet, on the other hand, the feeling of the people so much surpasses my former expectations, that I am confident you may now rely with safety on their firm and continued support. The impression is not that of a momentary excitement; knowledge of the subject has increased, and is increasing; and if the Government disregard the opinions of the people on slavery, I believe, as well as hope, they will have reason to repent. I see the difficulties of your career. I meditate much upon them; but with such a cause, your powers, and leisure, there never was a nobler course for man to run. *Succeed the cause must;* it is a question of time only. * * * Still, however, time is of inestimable value, and he who can accelerate the event one year, a single year, will have well spent his life."

With the Reform question on their hands, there seemed but little chance that the Whig Government, however friendly to emancipation, would undertake its

accomplishment. But Mr. Buxton would leave no chance untried. On the 25th of March, in stating his intention to move a resolution for the complete abolition of slavery, he declared that he would "most readily leave the matter in the hands of Government, if Government would take it up;";* but to this offer no reply was made.

It is to this subject that the following letter alludes, addressed to a member of the Administration:—

"April 6. 1831.

* * * "I feel bound to tell you that upon the most attentive consideration I shall feel compelled to withhold my concurrence from any resolutions which do not declare 'the extinction of slavery' to be their object. I am aware that I do not go farther in detestation of slavery than his Majesty's Government; but perhaps a long and laborious investigation may have led me to entertain a deeper sense of the practical evils of the system. In my mind, these amount to nothing short of a crime; and, if it be a crime, the way to deal with it is, not to strip it of some of its worst features, but to abandon it altogether.

"I confess I distrust all ameliorations of slavery. If the Government resolve to undertake them, theirs will be the responsibility; and if they succeed, theirs exclusively the merit.

"I believe their intentions to be perfectly honest, and that they will act resolutely in carrying those intentions into execution. For these and for other reasons, it gives me the greatest pain to be unable to yield my opinions to theirs. I am sure if I act thus, it is not from obstinacy, or from unwillingness to meet their wishes; but it is from fidelity to the cause itself, and to the friends of the cause, to whom I am pledged to bring forward a motion, not for the mitigation, but for the extinction, of slavery. I beg you to believe that it is with reluctance I thus bring myself forward, and that it is only as acting in some sort on behalf of a large body in the nation, that I presume to trouble you beforehand with the line of conduct I shall adopt."

* Hansard for that date.

A few days later, in presenting, among 500 petitions against slavery, one subscribed by the Society of Friends, he said :—

" I have great pleasure in presenting this petition from that body ; as they were the very first persons in the country who promulgated the doctrine that the buying, selling, or holding of slaves was contrary to the Christian religion. Forty years ago they presented the first petition for the abolition of the slave-trade, and eight years ago they presented the first petition for the abolition of slavery."*

It was a part of Mr. Buxton's policy to avail himself as little as possible of the evidence furnished by men favourable to emancipation ; he always strove to draw his statements from the speeches and writings of his opponents, or immediately from official reports. In this branch of his labours (and it was no small one) he derived much assistance from the great knowledge and practised sagacity of Mr. Macaulay, and also from the secretary of the Anti-slavery Society, Mr. Thomas Pringle, whose poetical writings are well known. Mr. Pringle's originality, conjoined with other qualities, as useful if less brilliant ; his admirable English style ; his diligence, tact, and temper, rendered good service to the cause. Being ready to catch a hint from any quarter, they frequently tracked documents of great value into the Colonial Office, and then by reiterated motions Mr. Buxton usually succeeded in bringing them to light.

In this way vast funds of information had been collected ; and between the sessions of 1830–31, Mr. Buxton ransacked all his stores for evidence relative to the

* George Fox (the founder of Quakerism), when in Barbadoes, urged the overseers "to deal mildly and gently with the negroes, and not to use cruelty towards them, as the manner of some has been and is."—(See "A Popular Life of George Fox." C. Gilpin, 1847.)

decrease of the slave population. Having completed his calculations, he laid them before the House on the 15th of April.

In the commencement of his speech he assured the House that he had not the slightest feeling of hostility towards the West Indian proprietors, nor the slightest disposition to cast reproach upon them ; and he disclaimed any wish to rest his argument on cases of individual atrocity, though abundance of them might be brought forward.

He proceeds : —

“ But, amid the conflicting statements as to the condition of the slaves, it would be extremely desirable to find any fair and unequivocal test of their condition. There is such a test — in the rate at which the slave population has increased or decreased. It is a doctrine admitted by all parties, that, under all circumstances, except those of extreme misery, population must increase. Such is the law of nature, and it is conformable to the experience of all mankind. That law of increase may be interrupted, but it can be interrupted only by causes of extreme misery.

“ The question, then, is, whether in the fourteen sugar-growing colonies the slave population has increased, has been stationary, or has decreased ? The answer is, it has not increased, it has not been stationary, it has decreased. Not only has it decreased, but it has decreased at a rate so rapid that I confess it surprises me, and I am sure will astonish the House. In the last ten years the slave population in those fourteen colonies has decreased by the number of 45,800 persons.”*

* In 1835 numerous papers relating to the statistics of the colonial dependencies of Great Britain were ordered by the House of Commons to be printed. Amongst them appeared some tables, which showed the yearly decrease of the slave population in eleven West India islands, during a period of twelve years previous to emancipation. They differ in some degree from those on which Mr Buxton founded his argument, but they give a *still greater decrease*. By these tables it appears that in those eleven islands the decrease in the number of slaves (exclusively of manumissions) had been 60,119.—(See Parl. Papers in the Appendix)

In Tobago, within ten years, one sixth of the slave population had perished. In Demerara it had diminished by 12,000, in Trinidad by 6000, within twelve years. "The fact is," he said, "that in Trinidad, as the late Mr. Marryat observed, 'the slaves die off like rotten sheep.'" These diminutions were exclusive of manumissions.

He then showed that, while in slavery the numbers of the negroes decreased thus rapidly, in freedom they were doubling. For example, the *free* black population of Demerara had (exclusive of manumissions) been increased by half in fourteen years. And the free negroes of Hayti had increased by 520,000 in twenty years, that is, their numbers had more than doubled.

"Now, Sir," he continued, "if the blacks in slavery had increased as the free blacks have increased, the slave population should have added in the last ten years 200,000 to its numbers; whereas that number has been diminished by 45,000. To keep *pari passu* with the free blacks, the blacks in slavery should have increased 20,000 a year; whereas they have decreased 4000 a year. They should have increased fifty a day, whereas they have decreased ten a day. For this effect, this striking exception to the universal law of nature, there must be a specific cause. It could not occur by accident. What *is* the cause? I will tell the House what it *is not*. It is not, as it has been affirmed to be, any disproportion between the sexes; any deficiency in the number of females. In 1814, the number of female slaves exceeded that of males by 5000. The cause, therefore, of this decrease in the slave population, is not any disproportion between the sexes; it is not war sweeping away its thousands; it is not climate; it is not soil. If any one thinks that the last two circumstances may operate injuriously upon the slave population, I ask him why, under the same circumstances, the free black population has so much increased? Sir, the real cause is *the forced labour in the sugar colonies*, and nothing else. The law of nature would be too strong for any other cause. It is too strong for climate, witness Bencoolen.

It is too strong for war, witness Africa. It is too strong for savage life, witness the Maroons of Jamaica. It is too strong for vice and misery, witness Hayti. All such impediments yield to the law of nature; but the law of nature yields to the cultivation of sugar in the sugar colonies. Where the blacks are free, they increase. Climate, soil, war, vice, misery, are too feeble to withstand the current of nature. But let there be a change in only one circumstance; let the population be the same in every respect, only let them be slaves instead of free-men, and the currency is immediately stopped.

“ I hope the resolutions I intend to submit will appear temperate, although in them I declare myself no friend to ameliorating measures, in which I have no faith. I do not think that by such measures the mortality can be repressed. Besides, Sir, I must tell you, that I look upon the enslaving of our fellow-men as a crime of the deepest dye; and I therefore consider that it should be dealt with, not by palliatives, but by destroying it altogether.”

He concluded by moving the following resolutions:—

“ That in the resolutions of May, 1823, the House distinctly recognised it to be their solemn duty to take measures for the abolition of slavery in the British colonies; that in the eight years which have since elapsed, the colonial assemblies have not taken measures to carry the resolutions of the House into effect; that, deeply impressed with a sense of the impropriety, inhumanity, and injustice of colonial slavery, this House will proceed to consider of and adopt the best means of effecting its abolition throughout the British dominions.”

The motion was seconded in an able speech by Lord Morpeth.

Lord Althorp stated that, although he could not consent to this motion, he thought it was time “ to adopt other measures with the colonists than those of mere recommendations,” and that he should propose that a distinction in the rate of duties should be made in favour of those colonies which should comply with the wishes of Government as to amelioration. After an animated discussion, the debate was adjourned. Mr.

O'Connell, who throughout gave a steady and energetic support to the anti-slavery cause, came across the House, and said, "*Buxton, I see land.*" The prognostic was true; for although, owing to the dissolution of Parliament, the debate was not resumed, and the motion therefore dropped, yet to the argument founded upon the decrease of population may be attributed more than to any thing else the speedy downfall of slavery. The force of that argument was well understood in Parliament; accordingly it was vigorously sifted by the opposite party; but, having been drawn from the returns of registration sworn to by the planters themselves, it was found impossible to shake it. The appalling fact was never denied, that at the time of the abolition of the slave trade, in 1807, the number of slaves in the West Indies was 800,000: in 1830 it was 700,000. That is to say, in twenty-three years it had diminished by 100,000.*

It may here be well to mention, though it be in anticipation of our history, how fully Mr. Buxton's inferences were confirmed by subsequent events. In 1834 emancipation took place, the law of nature resumed its force, the population began to increase, and the census in 1844 proves that in the twelve previous years the black population in fourteen of the islands had *increased* by 54,000.†

The abolitionists are often blamed for the present want of labour in the West Indies. It should be remembered, however, that, had slavery not been abolished, the population (taking the decrease at its average rate

* See Anti-slavery Reporter, vol. v. p. 264.

† Not more than fourteen of the islands sent in their returns of population. Had they been received from the whole twenty-one the increase would of course have been far greater, especially as Jamaica is not included.—(See Parl. Papers in the Appendix.)

before emancipation) would by this time have *diminished* by much more than 100,000 instead of having *increased* in the same proportion.

At the end of April, Parliament was dissolved, and the country was hurried into a whirlpool of reform agitation, in which all other interests were merged; so that Mr. Buxton might think himself fortunate in having forced upon the ear of Parliament the short but impressive argument which has been laid before the reader. The approaching election rendered it necessary for Mr. Buxton to visit Weymouth. He thus writes home from Bellfield on the 28th of April, 1831:—

“ I was up at seven o’clock this morning, and have been taking another charming walk in the shrubbery, looking at the sea, which is splendid, and enjoying the Epistle to the Colossians. At nine o’clock we breakfast, and at ten I renew my canvass, which was very successful yesterday.

“ I found all my constituents eager for Reform beyond conception; had I voted against it, I should hardly have got any support. Is not this unexpected?

“ The weather is delightful, and I thoroughly enjoy a taste of spring in the country. The walks about are lined with quantities of flowers; it *is* a charming place! Give my love to my secretary *, and tell her that I find an attorney’s clerk a poor substitute.

“ I hope you will enjoy Simeon’s visit. I deeply lament missing it; I was in great hopes we should have got a great deal of good out of the old Apostle. Pray get all you can, and keep a piece for me.”

To his eldest Son, at Trinity College, Cambridge.

“ Devonshire St., May 15. 1831.

“ My mind has much turned towards you of late, and I have thought more than you might suppose of your approaching examination. Not that I am very solicitous about the result, except so far as your heart may be set on success. I should be

* His eldest daughter.

very sorry to have you damped and disappointed, but for myself, I shall be just as well satisfied with you if you are low in the last class, as if you are high in the first.

“ But I have a piece of advice to give you, with regard to the examination, which I am sure will, if attended to, be of service ; and if you remember it, and act upon it, it will be useful whenever, during your future life, you are about to engage in any thing of more than usual importance. Go to God in prayer ; lay before him, as before your wisest and best friend, your care, your burthen, and your wishes ; consult him, ask his advice, entreat his aid, and commit yourself to him ; but ask especially, that there may be this restraint upon the efficacy of your prayers,—that His will, and not your wishes, may govern the result ; that what you desire may be accomplished, provided He sees it to be best, and not otherwise.

“ The experience of my life is, that events always go right when they are undertaken in the spirit of prayer. I have found assistance given and obstructions removed, in a way which has convinced me that some secret power has been at work. But the assurance of this truth rests on something stronger than my own experience. Scripture is full of declarations of the prevalence and efficacy of prayer, and of the safety of those who resort to it. ‘ Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he shall bring it to pass.’ ‘ This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.’ ‘ Wait on the Lord, be of good courage and he will strengthen thy heart ; wait, I say, on the Lord.’

“ It is not often I give you my advice ; attend to it in this instance. Depend upon it, prayer is the best preparation you can have for your examination, and for every thing else.”

In June, 1831, several members of the Government, and other gentlemen, came to look over the Brewery in Spitalfields, and afterwards dined there with Mr. Buxton, professedly on beef-steaks, cooked in one of the furnaces. Mr. J. J. Gurney gives the following account of the party :—

“ Earham, 12 mo. 23rd, 1831.

* * * “ The Premier, grave and thoughtful as he seemed, did great justice to our dinner. ‘ Milord Grey,’ cried the

Spanish General Alava to him, as he was availing himself of a fresh supply of beef-steaks (pronounced by the Lord Chancellor to be ‘perfect’)—‘Milord Grey, vous êtes à votre *sixième*.’

“The contrast between Lord Grey and Alava was curious; the former, the dignified, stiff, sedate British nobleman of the old school; the latter, the entertaining, entertained, and voluble foreigner. He had been the faithful companion of the Duke of Wellington through most of his campaigns, and now had displayed his usual energy by coming up all the way from Walmer Castle, near Dover, in order to help in devouring the product of the stoke-hole in Spitalfields.

“The Lord Chancellor was in high glee: he came in a shabby black coat, and very old hat; strangely different from the starred, gartered, and cocked-hat dignity of the venerable Premier.

* * * It was my agreeable lot to sit between Lord Grey and Dr. Lushington, and the latter being occupied by his friend on the other side, I was left to converse with the Premier, which I had the pleasure of doing for nearly two hours.

* * * We talked of his long political course, and Lord Shaftesbury, who sat next to him on the other side, complimented him on the subject.

“Lord Grey. ‘I came into Parliament for Northumberland when I was two-and-twenty, and I have been forty-five years a senator.’ Of course it was easy to draw the inference that he was sixty-seven years of age. On my expressing the interest I felt for him, and even sympathy, under the burthen he was bearing, he replied, ‘I am much too old for it. I would have refused the undertaking, if I could have done so consistently with my duty.’

“Our next subject was parliamentary eloquence. I asked him who, amidst the vast variety of orators whom he had been accustomed to hear, appeared to him to be the best speaker and most able debater.

“Lord Grey. ‘Beyond all doubt and comparison, Fox. His eloquence was irresistible. It came from his heart, and produced a corresponding effect on the hearts of his hearers.’

“I asked his opinion of Sheridan. The answer was, ‘He was very able, but could not speak without preparation.’

“I ventured to insinuate that there was no part of a Premier’s office more responsible than that of making bishops. He assented,

adding, ‘ You know I have had none to make at present.’ We talked of the Bishop of Norwich.* Lord Grey expressed his admiration of his conduct and character, though he only knew him in his public capacity. ‘ I fear the bishop is too old to accept any offer that I can make him, but I assure you that the very first and best thing that I have to give away shall be at his service.’

“ This declaration has since been fully verified, by his offering to the bishop the see of Dublin, which the latter, as had been anticipated, refused; observing, in the words of old Erasmus to the Emperor of Austria, that dignity conferred upon him would be like a burden laid on a falling horse: ‘ Sarcina equo collabenti imposita.’

“ When the dinner was ended, I quitted my post by Lord Grey, and joined Buxton, Lord Brougham, and the Duke of Richmond, at the top of the table. Buxton was telling a story on the subject of Reform (the only way in which that subject could be mentioned, as the dinner was not political, and Tories were present). ‘ A stage-coachman,’ said he, ‘ was driving a pair of sorry horses, the other day, from London to Greenwich. One of them stumbled, and nearly fell. “ Get up, you *borough-mongering* rascal you!” said the coachman to the poor beast, as he laid the whip across his back.’ The Chancellor laughed heartily at this story. ‘ How like my Lord — there was the old horse!’ said he to me, laughing, and putting his hands before his face,—Lord — sitting opposite to us.

“ Buxton now left us, to talk with Lord Grey, whom he very much delighted by praising Lord Howick’s speech upon slavery. It was a speech which deserved praise for its honesty and feeling, as well as for its talent. But the old Premier seemed to think that his son had been carried by his zeal rather too far.

“ Something led us (Lord Brougham and myself) to talk about Paley, and I mentioned the story of his having on his death-bed condemned his ‘ Moral Philosophy,’ and declared his preference for the ‘ Horæ Paulinæ’ above all his other works. This led Brougham to speak of both those works. ‘ Did you ever hear that King George III. was requested by Mr. Pitt to make Paley a bishop? The king refused; and, taking down the “ Moral Philosophy ” from the shelf, he showed Pitt the

* Dr. Bathurst.

passage in which he justifies subscription to articles not fully credited, on the ground of expediency. ‘This,’ said the King, “is my reason for not making him a bishop.”’ Lord Grey overheard the Chancellor’s story and confirmed it; ‘but,’ added the Chancellor, ‘I believe the true reason why George III. refused to make Paley a bishop was, that he had compared the divine right of kings to the divine right of constables!’ * * * The Chancellor was very cordial, and we were all delighted with his entertaining rapidity of thought, ready wit, and evident good feeling. Nor was it possible to be otherwise than pleased with all our guests, with whom we parted, about eleven o’clock at night, after a flowing, exhilarating, and not altogether uninteresting day.”

Mr. Buxton subjoins,—

“ Our party at the Brewery went off in all respects to my satisfaction. Talleyrand could not come, having just received an account of Prince Leopold being elected king of Belgium. Brougham said this was a severe disappointment, as his Excellency never eats or drinks but once a-day, and had depended on my beef-steaks.

“ The party arrived at about six o’clock, and consisted of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Grey, Duke of Richmond, Marquis of Cleveland, Lords Shaftesbury, Sefton, Howick, Durham, and Duncannon, General Alava, S. Gurney, Dr. Lushington, Spring Rice, W. Brougham, J. J. Gurney, R. Hanbury, &c., twenty-three in all.

“ I first led them to the steam engine; Brougham ascended the steps, and commenced a lecture upon steam-power, and told many entertaining anecdotes; and when we left the engine he went on lecturing as to the other parts of the machinery, so that Joseph Gurney said he understood brewing better than any person on the premises. I had Mr. Gow up with his accounts, to explain how much our horses each cost per annum; and Brougham entered into long calculations upon this subject. To describe the variety of his conversation is impossible—

‘From grave to gay, from lively to severe.’

“ At dinner I gave but two toasts, ‘The King,’ and ‘The memory of George III.,’ whose birthday it was. We had no

speeches; but conversation flowed, or rather roared like a torrent, at our end of the table. The Chancellor lost not a moment; he was always eating, drinking, talking, or laughing; his powers of laughing seemed on a level with his other capacities. * * *

" Talking of grace before dinner he said, ' I like the Dutch grace best, they sit perfectly still and quiet for a minute or two.' I thought it very solemn. Again, ' I am a great admirer of the Church; but the clergy have one fault—they grow immortal in this world. You cannot think how they trouble me by living so long. I have three upwards of ninety years old; bedridden, bereft of understanding, incapable of enjoyment and of doing duty; but they will live, and are keeping men I long to provide for out of their benefices. There's Wilberforce's son, and Macaulay's, and Austin; I am waiting for an opportunity of showing that I do not forget them, but these old gentlemen thwart me: surely there is no sin in wishing that they were gathered to their fathers.' He then went on to speak of Austin. ' He is exactly the man who deserves the patronage of Government; the Bishop of ——, who is as good a man as can be, but as simple-hearted as good, came to me the other day, and told me that there was a clergyman in his diocese of excellent character who had suffered from the West Indians; his name was Austin; probably I had never heard of him, though his name had been mentioned in Parliament. I soon convinced him that I knew more of Austin than he did, and I mean to send him the debate on Smith's case.* I think he might pick up some good principles in it. But as for Austin, I do not forget what you said to me last December, and you shall soon see that I do not. If I have not done something already, blame not me, but these everlasting parsons.'

" We then talked about the Court of Chancery, and I said, ' I hope to see the day in which you shall be sitting in your Court and calling for the next case, and the officer of the Court shall tell you that all the cases are disposed of: that will be the most glorious hour of your life.' ' Well,' said he, ' that you shall see, and see it too before the close of the session. Depend upon it there shall not be an appeal case in the House of Lords in two months' time!'

* See p. 159.

"He inquired the wages of the draymen. I told him about 45*s.* weekly; and we allow them to provide substitutes for a day or two in the week, but we insist on their paying them at the rate of 26*s.* per week. 'Yes,' said he, 'I understand; these rich and beneficed gentry employ curates, and the curates of the draymen get about as much salary as those of the clergy.'

"After dinner we took them to the stables to see the horses. Somebody said, 'Now the Lord Chancellor will be at a loss; at all events he knows nothing about horses.' However, fortune favoured him, for he selected one of the best of them, and pointed out his merits. Some one proposed that he should get upon his back, and ride him round the yard, which he seemed very willing to do; and thus ends my history of the Lord Chancellor.

"Lord Grey looked care-worn, but was remarkably cordial."*

* * * *

The new Parliament, which had met on the 14th of June, was altogether occupied in debates on the Reform Bill; and Mr. Buxton, who was deeply interested in the progress of the measure, was detained in London till September.

The following paper was written six weeks after his return to his usual recreations in the country:—

"Northrepps Hall, Oct. 26. 1831.

"S. Hoare goes away to-day. Shooting has been good medicine for him; he came down with very gloomy views on the state of public affairs; but the dangers from Reform or the rejection of Reform — the perils of the Church and State — have gradually disappeared, and now, as far as he can see, the country, if not prosperous and secure, is at least threatened with no imminent danger!

"I cannot but think that the air, exercise, and absence of care are essential to his health of body, and to the tranquillity of his mind; nay, I doubt whether he could go on in his very

* Mr. Buxton had a very high opinion of Lord Grey. "If you talk with him for half an hour," he remarked on one occasion, "you find his intellect a head higher than any body's else; he has more mind than any man in this country"

useful career without that season of repose and relaxation. This is my deliberate judgment with regard to him, and may God bless him, and give him health of body, a cheerful and a wholesome mind—peace here and for ever! It is not often that two persons have a union so strong, so unvarying, so cemented by a similarity of taste and pursuit, of principles and views, agreeing so entirely in serious as well as in lighter concerns as that which for five-and-twenty years has subsisted between us. Well, may God bless him, and may we edify and benefit, as well as amuse, each other.

“ As for myself, I feel about shooting that it is not time lost if it contributes to my health and cheerfulness. I have many burthens, and it is well to cast them off, lest they should so dispirit and oppress me that I become less capable of active exertion.

“ But now my holiday is nearly ended: shooting may be my recreation, but it is not my business. It has pleased God to place some duties upon me with regard to the poor slaves, and those duties I must not abandon. Oppression and cruelty, and persecution, and, what is worse, absence of religion, must not continue to grind that unfortunate race through my neglect. Grant, O God, that I may be enabled by thy Holy Spirit to discharge my solemn duties to them. Thou hast promised thy Spirit, thy aid, and thy wisdom to those who ask them, and under a sense of my utter incompetency to do anything of my own strength, I humbly and earnestly crave and entreat thy guiding wisdom, and that power and strength which cometh from thee. Make me an instrument in thy hands for the relief and for the elevation of that afflicted people. For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now arise, O Lord, and grant me the privilege of labouring and combating in their behalf. I am inclined to think that it will not be wrong to give two mornings in the week, while the fine weather lasts, to exercise, and the evenings of those days to letters and my various businesses—I shall then have four days for slavery. * * * Once more I pray that it may please thee, O God, for Christ’s sake, to lift up the light of thy countenance on me, my labours, my meditations, and my prayers; grant me to grow in grace, and call forth the powers thou hast given me for thy own ser-

vise; strengthen me with might in the inner man; deal bountifully with thy servant. Amen."

A few days later he writes again:—

" November 6. 1831.

" Accept, O Lord, my thanks for that indulgent mercy which has followed me all my days. I thank thee that I am in vigour of body and mind; that I am not under the influence at this moment of any sore calamity; that I am not racked with pain, nor tormented with grievous apprehension; but that it is a time of some peace and serenity.

" I bless thee that, in all the outward circumstances of life, thou hast dealt bountifully with me; that thou hast given me, not indeed great talents and endowments, but a sound mind and enough force of understanding for the performance of my duties; that thou hast placed me in a reputable station, given me a good business, fair health, competence; in short, that in these things I am more prosperous than many that deserve them better; that if not placed on the hill, I am not cast down into the valley. In my family I have been happy. Severe afflictions have come; some of those most dear to me have been snatched away in the dawn of their days, and one is lately gone whom I unceasingly deplore; but he is gone to his God; he is in peace; he is an inhabitant of those mansions prepared by thine Almighty power for those who love thee. Then hast thou not rescued me from a thousand perils, from temptations, from sins? Can I not respond to the thanksgivings of the Psalmist (Psalm ciii. 1—5)? Am I not within reach of great spiritual advantages? I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast led me to read my Bible, and hast supplied me with thy Spirit while I read, so that my heart and mind have been fixed on the power of prayer, on the influence of the Spirit, on the mercies of my God, on the deliverance of mankind through a blessed Saviour. Yes! thou hast offered to me that ' living bread which cometh down from heaven,' and giveth eternal life to those who feed on it. Thy mercies, in truth, have been to me abundant and innumerable, as the leaves of the forest, as the sands of the sea. Benignant and bountiful hast thou been to me all the days of my life, and may it please thee evermore to be so, to continue to bless me in body, in mind, in estate, in pursuits, in family, in friends, in

business, in prayer, in meditation, in thankfulness for the visible mercy of God, and in the atonement of Christ.

"We stand now in a peculiar crisis; though I am not troubled with care, or depressed with apprehension, there is reason for alarm. It is, both in private and public matters, a time of trouble, and I have good reason to seek thee with earnestness of supplication in this perilous period. As for public matters, have I not reason to turn steadfastly to Him who can shield us from dangers, however imminent and however terrible? Last week the Bristol riots prevailed, and the same spirit may spread through the country. In this neighbourhood the incendiary has been briskly at work. Last night the news arrived that the cholera had really commenced its ravages in England; and to-morrow a meeting of the working classes is to take place in London. Storms seem gathering in every direction, and the tempest may soon break upon my own house. Assist me then, O Lord, to prepare for events which may so soon approach. Let my house be planted on a rock which shall stand firm in the buffetings of the winds and the waves. O my God, I feel that there is no security, save the perfect security which belongs to thee. Vain is the help of man; folly is his wisdom; feebleness his strength; but in entire unshaken confidence I desire to commit and to commend to thee myself, my family, my friends, my neighbours, my country.

"Give us wisdom to act aright; preside over our councils; lead us to the right path, and to do the right thing. Let thy Spirit be poured forth upon us in rich profusion, prepare us for outward danger by inward grace. Teach us that no real calamity can befall us if we are in the hands of our God, that we are safe under the shadow of His wings. Give us the spirit of true prayer, and let it abide with us; and if death be coming, 'in the hour of death and in the day of judgment, good Lord deliver us,' for the sake of our blessed Redeemer, Christ Jesus."

The insurrectionary spirit of the day, alluded to in this paper, reached even the quiet neighbourhood of Cromer; and one morning, when Mr. Buxton was at breakfast, news came that a band of rioters were passing along a road near his house, on their way to destroy a farmer's

thrashing machine. He at once walked out to meet them, accompanied by his younger children, and on coming up to them made a short speech, explaining to them what fools they were, and urging them not to run the risk of the gallows. When he had done, observing that they were headed by a man with a long pole in his hand, surmounted by a reaping-hook, Mr. Buxton stepped up to him, and after a moment's struggle wrested it away, none of the others interfering. He then disarmed another in the same way, and this so completely disconcerted these valiant rioters, that they began to disperse, and were soon all safe at home in their cottages.

At the beginning of this autumn Mr. Buxton had sustained the loss of his early and highly valued friend John Henry North, who had sunk under the fatigue incurred by his exertions in Parliament against the Reform Bill. Their friendship had not been cooled by the difference in their political careers.

To Mrs. North.

“ My dear Friend, “ Northrepps, November 20. 1831.

“ I have not written to you of late partly from a reluctance to intrude on your griefs, and partly from another feeling. What can I say to comfort you? There are topics of consolation for ordinary calamities; but, in your case, the blow has been too deep and too terrible to admit of any comfort save one, and with that I trust you are abundantly blessed. I have made, however, some inquiries about you, and was distressed to hear of your extreme depression; not that I wonder at it; your loss has been great indeed; but I wish to say to you—Cheer up, my friend! the day is coming in which you will, I confidently believe, be restored to the object of your affection. The blow which has levelled your joys and your hopes with the dust came from the hand of a most loving Father, and hereafter you will know that it was sent in mercy and loving-kindness. I heartily wish that I had sometimes the privilege of seeing you. I,

too, have had very deep afflictions in my family ; many of the pleasant pictures which my imagination had painted have been destroyed. This, I believe, makes my heart more susceptible of the distress of others, and I should be glad of the opportunity of pointing out to you those passages in Scripture, and elsewhere, in which I have found relief and comfort. But if I do not see you, I do not forget you. I remember your forlorn and solitary state, and the bitter contrast between your home now and in former times. I can conceive the dreariness of it, and how constantly you must miss such a friend and companion as you have lost ; but there is consolation in reflecting on what he said and what he felt in his last hours, and in tracing his happy change from this sorrowful world, to the inexpressible joys and glories of which he is now, I firmly trust, a partaker.

“ This is a very painful period of the year to me. This time, almost this day, last year, I lost a son — and such a son ! But God’s will be done ! I find that nothing so takes off the sting of my grief as a realising sense of his perfect happiness. My dear boy’s name was *John Henry*, so named after the dearest friend of my youth.

“ Believe me, my dear friend, very truly and in sincere sympathy,

“ Yours,

“ T. FOWELL BUXTON.”

He thus writes to a gentleman with whom he had been engaged in important business, and who was now labouring under indisposition : —

“ Devonshire Street, March, 1832.

“ It seems very long since I have written to you, or heard from you, but I am rejoiced to hear better tidings of your health. The worst part of the spring is now over. I have more confidence in air and gentle exercise than in all the doctors ; and I confidently hope that these will recruit your spirits and your health, so as fully to re-establish you.

“ You will remember that I spoke to you some months ago upon the subject of religion. I, at least, well recollect that you received what I said with your usual kindness. I had some doubts as to the kind of books which you would be inclined to read. I have sent you a few, and shall be really glad to hear that you have read them and liked them.

"After all, the main purpose of our living here is to prepare for eternity. It matters little how we fare in this world, provided a better awaits us. Death will soon overtake both the sick and the healthy : you and I, and all now alive, must soon quit this world ; and it is an awful thing to know that either perfect happiness or eternal misery awaits us.

"It is difficult to dwell sufficiently on these things in the busy occupation of life, and I believe that sickness is often sent in mercy for the purpose of turning our minds to reflection and repentance ; and that thus, to many, illness has been the greatest blessing of their lives. I both hope and believe this is the case with you. I can bear testimony, and have often done so, to your many excellent and generous qualities, but these alone will not suffice : something more is necessary, and that something is repentance for past sins—a desire and determination to obey God, and, above all, faith in Jesus Christ.

"My hope and wish for you is, that you may be led to pray fervently and constantly for the Spirit of God to teach you. If you ask for that Spirit it will be given to you : it will teach you to read the Bible, it will enlighten your mind on the truths which it contains, and, especially, it will make you to know and feel two things,—first, that God is ready to pardon even the greatest of sinners ; and, secondly, that this pardon is derived, not from our own merits, but from the merits of our Saviour.

"I have been led, my dear friend, to say thus much from the sincere interest and friendship I have always felt for you. I entreat you to take it as kindly as it is meant, and to make good use of the leisure which you now have, in attending to the most important concern you were ever engaged in."

The following is an extract from one of his papers, dated Jan. 1. 1832 :—

"Grant, O Lord, that I may begin the next year under the guidance and influence of that blessed Spirit, which, if I grieve it not, if I follow it implicitly, if I listen to its still small voice, if I love it as my friend and consult it as my counsellor, will surely lead me, in this life, in the pleasant paths of peace and holiness, and as surely conduct me hereafter to the habitations of unutterable joy.

“ Again and again I crave and entreat the presence and the power of that heavenly guide. O Lord, how much have I had in the past year to thank thee for! What mercy, what love, what compassion for my weakness, what readiness to pardon and obliterate the memory of my misdeeds! * * *

“ Now, am I sufficiently assiduous in the discharge of my duties? My great duty is the deliverance of my brethren in the West Indies from slavery both of body and soul. In the early part of the year I did in some measure faithfully discharge this. I gave my whole mind to it. I remember that I prayed for firmness and resolution to persevere, and that in spite of some formidable obstructions I was enabled to go on; but, latterly, where has my heart been? Has the bondage of my brethren engrossed my whole mind? The plain and the painful truth is, that it has not. Pardon, O Lord, this neglect of the honourable service to which thou hast called me.

“ Give me wisdom to devise, and ability to execute, and zeal and perseverance and dedication of heart, for the task with which thou hast been pleased to honour me. 2 Chron. xx. 12-17.

“ And now, Lord, hear and answer my prayer for myself. My first desire is, that this next year may not be thrown away upon any thing less than those hopes and interests which are greater and better than any that this world can contain. May no subordinate cares or earthly interests interrupt my progress. May I act as one whose aim is heaven; may my loins be girded, and my lights burning, and myself like unto men who wait for their lord. Conscious of my own weakness, of my absolute inability to do any thing by my own strength, any thing tending to my own salvation, I earnestly pray for the light and the impulse of thy Holy Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in my heart by faith.

“ Bless, O Lord God, my efforts for the extinction of that cruel slavery; or, rather, take the work into thine own hands.

“ Bless, O Lord, I earnestly pray thee, bless my family, relations, and friends. With what deep affection I pass them in review, and feel that never was any one privileged to possess a larger number of most faithful friends! I entreat, O Lord, that thou wouldest bless them with all thy choicest blessings, in their families, in their concerns, in their health, and, above all, in the growth of grace in their souls.

"There are some of them from whom I have received much more in kindness than I have ever requited. There are others who seem to need especial intercession. There are those with whom I have all my life been bound by the fastest ties of unclouded affection. For each and for all of them I pray thee, O Lord, turn their hearts to thyself; deliver them from pain, from sorrow, and from sin, and conduct them in thine own way to that fold of which Jesus Christ is the shepherd, and receive them at length as thine own, for the sake of Christ Jesus."

One of his nephews had joined in a school outbreak. Mr. Buxton thus writes to his father :—

"Northrepps, January 8. 1832.

"Your letter reached me to-night, and I lose no time in answering it. As for the '*insurrectionary movements*,' if you did not take them so seriously, we should rather be inclined to smile at them. Let me ask you one plain question. Do you really think one bit the worse of the boy for having been one of these rebels? I do not. Non-resistance to oppression, or supposed oppression, built upon a deep investigation of the tenor of Scripture, and upon the spirit evinced by the author of Christianity, is a very high attainment: it is not to be expected from a lad of his age. Again, it is of all things the most difficult to stand against the current of popular feeling, especially where the motive for doing so may be misconstrued into timidity and truckling.

"In short, if I were his father, I should affectionately and gently remind him that his fault consisted in a departure from the principles which his parents held. I should instil into his mind that it was more noble to stand alone, maintaining that course which they would approve, than to perform the most gallant insurgent exploits; and I should give him to understand that I expected to hear no more of such proceedings; and, in my own heart, I should be quite at ease on the subject. I certainly should send him back again. I would give the school another trial, and I should whisper in the master's ear, that if another rebellion took place *it must be the fault of the system*.

"The only thing about which I should feel any serious apprehension would be, lest the boy should get indirect praise

for his high spirit. I speak from experience. When I was a boy I obtained what then appeared to me to be the glorious discredit of being high-spirited and haughty, and careless of consequences. There is something in this to please the fancy and excite the pride of a boy; and in this character, which stands upon the borders of good and evil, made me very fierce and tyrannical. I say this the more freely, because I think I discern in his mother's letters a great deal of sorrow and apprehension at top, but underneath a little secret, sly satisfaction at her boy's spirit. I send him my love and a sovereign; and if you like, you may read him what I say as to the more noble and manly part which we expect him hereafter to take."

CHAPTER XVIII.

SLAVERY. 1832.

INSURRECTION IN JAMAICA.—LORDS' COMMITTEE.—LETTERS TO LORD SUFFIELD.—SPEECH AT PUBLIC MEETING.—POSITION OF PARTIES.—STATE OF THE COLONIES.—POLICY OF THE GOVERNMENT—DEBATE, MAY 24.—MR. BUXTON INSISTS ON DIVIDING THE HOUSE.—FORMATION OF THE COMMITTEE.—RELIGIOUS PERSECUTIONS IN JAMAICA.—RESULT OF THE COMMITTEE.—LETTERS.

WHEN the session of 1832 commenced, the nation was shaken to its centre by the closing struggle on the Reform question. Some may be disposed to wonder that Mr. Buxton, at such a crisis, did not take an active part in the exciting discussions of the day; but though warmly interested in the subject, and constant in giving his attendance and his vote, the incessant occupation arising out of the abolition question prevented him from coming prominently forward on other occasions. His attachment to the cause which so deeply interested him

“Had killed the flock of all affections else
That lived in him,”

and his best exertions were needed to prevent the pressing questions of the day from engulfing all remembrance of the far-distant slave. The attention of all parties was, however, for a time reclaed to the subject; first by the violent irritation expressed in the colonies at the declaration of Lord Althorp in the preceding year, that he would “insist on the enforcement” of ameliorating measures *, and at the consequent order in council

* April 15. 1831. Hansard. At one of the public meetings of the planters in Jamaica, this determination of the government was affirmed to

issued, with a despatch from Lord Goderich, in November; and, secondly, by the news of an alarming insurrection among the negroes in Jamaica, who, from hearing the indignant expressions of their masters against the home government, conceived that, "free paper was come," and had been suppressed by the planters. An attempt was made by the latter to implicate the missionaries and some of the clergy in the rebellion of the slaves, and Messrs. Gardner and Knibb were actually arrested on the charge, and indictments made out against them. The case, however, against the former completely broke down, and the Attorney-General abandoned the charge against the other. In fact, not one tittle of evidence was ever adduced against them.*

A warm debate took place on the 23rd of March, in which Lord Howick defended the conduct of Government, in having promised advantages to those colonies which would adopt unchanged the order in council; and asserted that, as the remonstrances of three successive Secretaries of State had proved ineffectual, "the time had arrived when the language of exhortation should cease." †

On the 25th of March Mr. Buxton mentions that twenty of his leading anti-slavery friends dined with him to discuss the subject of slavery, and devise the means of its extinction.

be "unjust and inhuman," while the allegations of the anti-slavery party were stigmatised as "the false and infamous representations of interested and infuriated lunatics"—(See the Life of Wm. Knibb, p. 111.)

* Sir Willoughby Cotton says, in a despatch to Lord Belmore, dated Jan. 3. "The whole of the men shot yesterday stated that they had been told by white people for a long time past that they were to be free at Christmas, and that the freedom order had actually come out from England, but had been withheld"—(See Parl. Paper for 16th March, 1832, No. 285, quoted in A. S. Reporter.)

† Hansard.

"But," says he, "this select band of our special friends and faithful supporters differed upon every practical point; and opinions wavered all the way, from the instant abolition of slavery without any compensation, to its gradual extinction through the agency, and with the cordial concurrence, of the planters."

"Let me then turn," he adds, "from the weakness of man to the strength and counsel of my God. Now, if never before, I see how precious is that promise, 'If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him. I feel that I do indeed lack this divine wisdom. The 142d Psalm speaks my feelings."

The West Indian proprietors in the Upper House* now moved for, and obtained, a committee of inquiry on West Indian affairs. "This committee," said Mr. Buxton †, "is a pretext for delay, and nothing else; I look on it as a calamity to our cause." He foresaw that its not having completed its inquiries would be urged as a motive for deferring the settlement of the question ‡; and he could not expect much impartiality from its decisions, knowing, as he did, that there was scarcely a stirring friend of emancipation in the Upper House.

To Lord Suffield.

"April 19 1832

"My dear Lord,— Will you have the goodness to ascertain for me, when you have an opportunity, what the powers of this hopeful committee are likely to be with regard to witnesses; whether it will authorise us to send for them from the West

* It is likely that the greater part of the non-resident proprietors were entirely ignorant of the proceedings on their estates, and of the cruelties inflicted on the slaves. Thus Mr. Lewis, in his entertaining work, "Negro Life in the West Indies," in which he does not fail to abuse Mr. Wilberforce, yet mentions his indignation, when he landed in Jamaica, at finding that his agent, who had given him glowing descriptions of his own humanity to his slaves, was in fact a worthless scoundrel, who had all the time been ill-treating them.

† At the General Meeting of the Anti-slavery Society, May, 1832.

‡ Thus, see Sir R. Peel's Speech, May 24. 1832.

Indies, &c. by agreeing to pay their expenses, and remunerate them for the loss of time and business? and whether the anti-slavery party, that is *yourself*, will have any authority or control in the committee?

"I protest, I think you Lords are even worse than we Commons, bad as we are. I could hardly listen to them in silence the night before last, or refrain from cheering the solitary voice that was lifted up for truth and righteousness. Well, much as we must lament that there are not many to echo it, how deeply rejoiced and thankful am I, and that in the name of the best part of England, and all the slaves, that there is that *one!* Personally, I cannot but congratulate you on what I consider so pre-eminently the post of honour.

'For this was all thy care,
To stand approved of God, though worlds
Judged thee perverse.'

He writes again, a few days later, to the same friend, who was dispirited by one of the many discouragements to which the struggle exposed him.

" * * * Away with all mortification. I can truly say, that I would rather incur obloquy, and shame, and disappointment in our good cause than get glory in any other; and I know nothing of your mind if you are not of the same opinion."

Mr. Buxton was one of the numerous witnesses examined before the Lord's committee, and he gladly availed himself of the opportunity of communicating some of his abundant information, and laid before it twenty-seven documents prepared with extreme care. Although the report of the committee was indecisive, the effect of its investigations was to diffuse more knowledge and sounder principles. After its labours were closed, Lord Suffield no longer stood alone in the House of Lords.

An animated public meeting was held on the 12th of May, at which the venerable Mr. Stephen presided. Mr.

Buxton concluded the address which he made on the occasion, in these emphatic words : —

“ When I call to mind the fact that, contrary to the law of nature, in a country friendly to the increase of population, it has diminished with such frightful rapidity, I would tell all who countenance such a system that they will have to account at a solemn tribunal for the 50,000 murders that have been committed through its agency. When I think of this and of the cart-whip, and of the millions of stripes inflicted by that accursed instrument, I am at a loss for words to express my feelings. When I trace the system through its baleful ramifications, when I contemplate this hideous cluster of crimes, there is but one language, the language of divine inspiration, that can convey what passes within me. ‘ They are a people robbed and spoiled, they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses ; they are for a prey, and no man delivereth ; for a spoil, and no man restoreth.’ When we look at the career of affliction of our brother man, for, after all, he is our brother, moulded in the same form, heir to the same immortality, and, although in chains and in suffering, on a level, in the eyes of God, with the proudest noble in that committee which has been appointed to sit in judgment upon him ; when I view him entering life by the desert track of bondage ; when I view him writhing under the lash of his tormentor ; when I see him consigned to a premature and unregarded grave, *having died of slavery* ; and when I think of the preparation which we, good Christian men and women, have enabled him to make for his hereafter,— there can be but one feeling in my heart, one expression on my lips : ‘ Great God ! how long, how long, is this iniquity to continue ? ’ ”

The position in which the Government, the West Indians, and the Abolitionists, stood to each other in 1832, was nearly that of equilibrium. The Abolitionists had received a considerable accession of Parliamentary force in the late general election, many of the candidates having pledged themselves to take the anti-slavery side. With his hands thus strengthened, Mr.

Buxton determined to press forward again the resolutions moved in the preceding year, aiming at an abolition of slavery, at once speedy and safe. But to this idea of speedy emancipation the ministers were by no means prepared to yield, though they fully admitted the principle that slavery should be finally abolished.

In the first place they felt the responsibility which makes men in power so often shrink from a hardy policy. In the second, they were compelled to consult for their own preservation, by conciliating the West Indian party. The immense Parliamentary strength of that body must be borne in mind, if we would understand the varied and often baffled course of the anti-slavery movement during this and the ensuing year. The fact was, that many of the great landowners at home held colonial property also, and inherited with it a natural hatred of that "reckless enthusiasm" which was bent on taking away their slaves. It was, therefore, the policy of the Government to avoid bringing the anti-slavery question to a crisis ; to keep it at arm's length ; and, by preventing it from coming to the test of a division, to escape committing themselves to either one or the other of the opposing parties.

Against such a policy it behoved the negro's advocate to stand firm. But this was rendered the more difficult to Mr. Buxton, by his hearty attachment to Whig principles, and by his personal regard for many members of the Cabinet. Besides, he looked upon the maintenance of the Whig ministry as of almost paramount importance to his own cause. By these contending considerations the perplexities of his course were greatly increased ; but he daily became more impressed with the necessity of vigorous and speedy measures. Deeply versed in the state of the West Indies, it was to him a thing plain and undoubted, that no policy could be so pernicious as that

of hesitation and delay. He thought that the dangers of rapid emancipation were not nearly so great as they were held to be. He believed that a good police and kind treatment would suffice to prevent those "frightful calamities" (the result of such an act), which Sir Robert Peel "shuddered to contemplate." * He boldly stated his belief that the negroes would go to work for wages, as soon as they were released from the terrors of the whip; and that at any rate the Legislature would find it the most hopeless task in the world to do what Lord Althorp called "employing itself most usefully, in bringing the slaves to such a state of moral feeling as would be suitable to the proposed alteration in their condition." †

The statistics which he had brought forward in the previous year appeared to him to demonstrate the utter folly, as well as the utter cruelty of slavery. A system that was killing off the labourers of the colonial islands at such a fearful rate, could be of no real good to any one. The best thing to be done, as he thought, would be to get rid of it at once, whatever the cost might be.

If experience can prove anything, it seemed to him to prove the necessity of a thorough change of policy with regard to slavery. For nine years the Government had been trying the gentle means indicated by the resolutions of 1823; yet the state of the slaves was not a whit better than it had been nine years before. The mortality was advancing with the same rapid strides. Nay, in Demerara, Essequibo, Jamaica St. Christopher's, and St. Vincent, the official returns show that the loss of life was greatest *in the last three* of the twelve years during which those returns of population

* Hansard, vol. xiii. p. 65.

† Ibid., vol. xiii. p. 59.

were made.* The punishments officially reported had never reached a more appalling number. The cases of individual cruelty brought to light in many quarters, but especially in the reports of the protectors of slaves, were as startling and as rife as ever. And as for religious instruction, the rancour of the planters against it, justified by their own doctrine, that it "is incompatible with the existence of slavery,"† had grown stronger and more violent year by year. Besides this tried and tested hopelessness of producing any real effect by mitigatory measures, there was another still weightier reason for not delaying the day of freedom. In this case, most surely, would indecision be decisive. A moral effect had been produced by the prolonged discussions of the question. The planter had been exasperated to the highest pitch of indignation; the slave had learnt reflection, but not self-control. A breach, deadly and imminent, lay between them; and already had some mutterings been heard of the storm, which would surely burst with terrific fury, if steps were not quickly taken to turn its wrath aside.‡

Yet the Government, though enforcing their recommendations with increasing urgency, still wished to defer emancipation till "a progressive improvement should have been made in the character of the slave population by the temperate enforcement of ameliorating measures."§

Here, then, Mr. Buxton came to issue with them.

* Hansard, vol. xiii. p. 39.

† Public Meeting at Trinidad. (See Hansard, vol. xi. p. 839.)

‡ This idea of a general revolt of the negroes, was a source of constant distress to Mr. Buxton. "The gun is cocked and on the shoulder," said he, with great emphasis, in speaking of the subject to one of his friends.

§ See the Resolutions of 1823, ante.

Indeed, the debate on which we are about to enter (and it was one of imminent consequence) hinged on that point.

The Government first strove to prevent him from bringing his motion forward. Failing in this they endeavoured, and with success, to add to the resolution which he proposed the words "conformably to the resolutions of 1823." To this he offered a strenuous resistance; and persisted in dividing the House, so as to compel it to declare in the face of the nation what it really meant to do on this great question.

The following letter*, written by his eldest daughter to the inmates of Northrepps Cottage, gives the details of all that occurred:—

"The debate † has at length actually taken place, and great cause have we to be satisfied with the result, now that we are safe on the other side of it. It is difficult exactly to recall the feelings and opinions of the preceding days; it was however the usual course,—every possible assault from friend and foe to *make* my father put off his motion, and, when that was found hopeless, to induce him to soften it down, or not to divide the House. Dr. Lushington was of opinion that it would endanger the cause to persevere, and difference of opinion with him is worse than anything to my father. The Government were also most pressing, and the terms they offered extremely tempting. On Tuesday morning my father and Dr. Lushington were a long time with Lord Althorp and Lord Howick, both of whom used every argument and almost every entreaty. I believe he did not reply much at the time, but was cruelly beset and acutely alive to the pain of refusing them, and, as they said, of embarrassing all their measures, and giving their enemies a handle at this tottering moment. They said, besides, that the public

* This is the first of a series of letters, addressed to the same individuals, to which we shall have frequent occasion to refer.

† May 24.

were so occupied with Reform, that it was only wasting the strength of the cause ; nobody would listen, and the effect would be wholly lost, whereas if he would wait a little they would all go with him ; their hearts were in fact with him, and all would be smooth, if he would have a little reason and patience. On his return he related all this to us, and proposed writing a letter to Lord Althorp previous to the final interview, which was to take place the next day. So a letter was written which I will copy.

“ ‘ To Lord Althorp.

“ ‘ My Lord,

“ ‘ May 22. 1832.

“ ‘ I am fearful lest I should have failed in conveying to you, at least in their force, the impressions under which I am acting. The fact is, from the study I have given to the subject, I am so deeply sensible of the practical as well as the inherent horrors of the system, and of the persecution and cruelties which are daily going on, that it is *impossible* for me to let this opportunity pass over without at least bearing my testimony against them. Allow me, moreover, to remind you, that, however insignificant in myself, I am the representative, on this question, of no mean body in this country, who would be, to an extent of which I believe you have no idea, disappointed and chagrined at the suspension of the question. But further (and this is a consideration far more really influential on my conduct), I cannot but feel myself the representative of a body who cannot speak for themselves, and for whom I must act, without other guide than my own conscience. There is nothing, whatever may be the result of my motion, which I should look back upon with so much regret, and I may add, shame, as the having, in any measure or degree, slighted their interest for my own convenience, or that of my friends in England, more particularly as those friends are powerful and important, while those for whom I am acting, however feebly, are helpless and oppressed. In short, I believe it to be most for their advantage that I should bring on my motion, and therefore I am necessitated to say candidly, that I cannot either postpone it or substitute for it anything short of abolition. To say I do *most reluctantly*