

The third Article of the proclamation requires no remarks. The fourth contains a clause which is not very obvious in its tendency, but which neutralizes all its more liberal provisions. It is ordained in this article, that a Hottentot, when the period of his servitude has expired, "is at liberty, with his wife and children, if they are with him, and with all his cattle, and other property, of whatever nature it may be, to leave his master, and enter into another's service; or," it is added, "to act in any other manner the laws of the colony admit of." It is to the last clause that the censure contained in the preceding remarks is pointed.

The phrase, "the laws of the colony admit of," is liable to similar objections with that part of the preamble on which I have already made some animadversions. To say the least, it has left the meaning of the governor undefined, and thereby opened a door for the introduction of a system of the most cruel oppression. Here I must be allowed to ask, what is the *other* manner in which the laws of the colony admit Hottentots to act? The Hottentot has but one or other of the alternatives which follow; he must again enter into service at the pleasure of his superior, or be treated as a vagabond. Is any Hottentot at liberty to make a purchase of land? or have grants ever been offered to any one of these natives of government land in any part either in the country or in the villages? or is he at liberty, without the permission of government, to possess himself of unoccupied spots, upon which he might maintain his cattle, and there take up his fixed abode, in conformity with the provisions of Article 1st? or, further, do the laws of the colony admit of his proceeding beyond the boundaries of the colony with his cattle and all his property? or, finally, is he at liberty, consistently even with these

laws, to enter ad libitum into our institutions? And if so, have those institutions sufficient land to enable them to support the cattle of all those Hottentots who might wish to avail themselves of the option? If it be found, on obtaining replies to these several queries, that the laws of the colony do not admit of Hottentots acting in any of the modes stated above, surely it will be allowed that some further provision is required, pointing out the precise manner of acting which "the laws of the colony" do admit of: and unhappily for the Hottentot nation, this omission in the proclamation has operated as a very serious hardship, and has doubtless contributed to frustrate the benevolent intentions of the governor towards them.

From the above premises, it is evident that the Hottentots have no option left them but to exchange one service for another, till age or infirmities have rendered them unfit to labour, or till they reach that state where "the weary are at rest, and the wicked cease from troubling."

By the omission of which we complain in this proclamation, the Hottentots are evidently left by government without any security for their property; for of course cattle (which, it is well known, forms the chief property of a Hottentot) can never be considered as secured by law to those persons who are prevented, through the operation of those same laws, from possessing one inch of land.

Further, they are condemned to a perpetual state of servitude, nor have they the power, by any exertion, however great and praiseworthy, of liberating themselves from the bondage; for, no sooner is the period of their contract for serving one inhabitant expired, but it becomes necessary for them to enter into service again;

and the only option left to the Hottentot is, whether he will engage himself to the same master, or to another. Their condition, therefore, is, in this respect, more deplorable even than that of the slaves, for the latter have generally a hope, however faint, that they may possibly one day obtain their freedom; and the kindness of a master, or their own exertions, may in some cases realize it; but to the Hottentot nation, or, at least, to by far the greater portion of it, no such hope is held out.

Another consequence that has ensued from this omission is, that the usual practice observed now, at least in the district of Uitenhage, by landdrosts, field-cornets, and also by the inhabitants generally, appears to be altogether at variance with the intended purposes of government; for being, it is supposed, unable to discover the other manner of acting, permitted to Hottentots by the laws of the colony, they seem generally to have drawn a conclusion, that there is no other method than that of serving them. The custom now, therefore, is, for a master to give to his Hottentot servant, at the expiration of the time stipulated in his contract, a pass to the nearest field-cornet, by whom he is usually informed that he must contract again immediately; or, if that is not done, he is provided with a pass to the landdrost of the district, who may direct him to find a master in two weeks, two days, or (as far as any security goes that the law provides against it) in two hours, if it be his will.

In the sixth Article we have a specimen of the redress which the Hottentot has to expect on preferring a complaint of ill treatment against his master:—If the injury sustained does not amount to mutilation, that is to say, the loss of an arm, or an eye, &c. the punishment

is to be commuted by a fine not exceeding fifty rix-dollars, and not under ten rix-dollars ; but if it is found that the Hottentot has urged his complaint wantonly and maliciously, it is ordained, that he shall receive such *correction* as the nature of the case shall require. While it is recollected that the judges in these cases are themselves farmers (for an appeal to the court of circuit by a Hottentot, in such cases, is out of the question, and, I may add, would prove useless,) the offender can have little to apprehend, and the complainant but little to hope for. When a Hottentot complains, he is immediately *put into the prison*, in durance vile, till his master or mistress, against whom the complaint is made, can be brought to appear to answer the complaint before the landdrost.

In this miserable situation the complaining Hottentot may be three days or three weeks before the master is brought to an examination. Such a law might be made to discourage complaints ; and a statute which should make it capital for a Hottentot to complain against his master would have the same effect ; but while it discourages complaints, it excludes the poor Hottentots from the very hope of redress, and shuts them up in reckless despair. After the wretched sufferer has perhaps crept on his hands and his knees to escape from his oppressor, and has been obliged to seek his way to the drostdy, in the night, and conceal himself among the bushes through the day, lest he should be discovered and seized by his oppressor before he has lodged his complaint, he is treated as a criminal, by being put in prison ; and before any investigation takes place, he is subjected to what in England would be considered as a severe punishment.

From such a commencement the result may be anticipated.

According to the law of *habeas corpus*, the accused party can demand a trial on a certain day, beyond which it cannot be delayed; but the injured party, in the case of the poor Hottentot, is not only imprisoned on making his complaint, but he may be kept there during the pleasure of the local authority, or till the aggressor, if he be a favourite with that authority, find it convenient to answer to the charges preferred against him. When the period at which the Hottentot is to be heard arrives, a scene is presented in perfect keeping with the other parts of the colonial system. The Hottentot is dragged from his dungeon, pale and emaciated, and perhaps labouring under a pulmonary complaint, which has been much aggravated by the unwholesome and damp air of the cell in which he has been confined, to take the place of a prisoner at the bar of the worshipful court before which he is to be tried; while the farmer is all this time seen strutting about through the court-house,—either biting his lips as he glances a disdainful eye at the accuser, (whom I must call the prisoner,) or whispering into the ears of his judges, intimating the familiar terms on which they stand, or bullying and setting them at defiance. The trial at last commences with a string of questions put to the prisoner, (that is, the accuser,) by the court, or by his master. All the time this species of torture is going forward, the members of the court and the spectators are making significant motions to each other by certain nods of the head, movements of the eyelids, and sardonic grins; and during all this process, the Hottentot hears in whispers around him, such phrases as

“ he'll catch it;” “ you may see in that Hottentot's face what is awaiting him ; these filthy beasts are ruined by indulgence ; they are the most idle, worthless set of people upon earth ; they are good for nothing till their backs are tanned with the shamboc !”

Such is the tremendous risk under which a Hottentot must enter a complaint against his master before a magistrate, that he may suffer the most cruel hardships in prison before his complaint is heard ; and after it is heard, in a great majority of cases in which his complaints are well founded, he may be severely flogged for having made them, and compelled to return to the service of the man whose cruelties he before found insupportable, and whose treatment is not likely to become milder by the means taken to obtain redress.

Nothing is said in the proclamation respecting the imprisonment of the complainant, and the practice may have crept in, like some others, from an omission in the proclamation in not providing against such an abuse of power.

It was justly remarked by Mr. Bigge, “ that it is impossible to conceive a worse state of things in a country, than that in which there exists one set of laws for the rich, and another for the poor *.” This state of things must always exist in every country where the rich are the law-makers, and have the execution of the

* For this liberal remark, I am indebted to Thomas J. Bigge, Esq., one of his Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry, recently at the Cape of Good Hope. If, as it is to be hoped, the report of the Commissioners, which is to be laid before Parliament, is pervaded by the spirit of this observation, the labours of that individual and his coadjutors will entitle them to the lasting gratitude of the inhabitants of South Africa, and of that of the inhabitants of all the foreign dependencies of the British crown.

laws in their own hands, without any checks upon their authority. It may be asked, what is the punishment of a farmer if he brings a false accusation against a Hottentot? How does it happen that this case has been left unprovided for, and in a proclamation said to have been devised for the protection of the Hottentots? Did this omission take place on the same principles on which a celebrated state of antiquity is said to have omitted enacting any law against *parrieide*, because they believed it was impossible that such a crime could ever be committed?

By comparing the preceding details with the following case, copied from the pages of an unsuspected witness, the reader will perceive whether "the individuals of the Hottentot nation" have justice dealt out to them, "in the same manner as the other inhabitants" of the colony.

"Lebricht Aris" (a Hottentot) "owed twelve dollars to a farmer in the neighbourhood of Gnadenthal, and not having the means to pay, engaged with the Boor abovementioned, to work six months on his farm, at two dollars (three shillings) per month, and his *cost*, (victuals,) on condition that the Boor should immediately discharge his debt. He had worked two months, when his creditor again called on him, and threatened him with imprisonment unless he immediately paid the twelve dollars. In this distress he applied to a missionary, who lent him the money, for the payment of which he received a regular receipt from his creditor. This receipt the poor man had in his pocket, but being nearly frightened out of his senses by the violence of the Boor's behaviour, he forgot to produce it at the field-cornet's. After discovering the Boor's neglect to

fulfil his engagement to pay his creditor, he now not only refused to work any longer with so faithless a master, but had a demand upon him for four dollars, being two months' pay. The Boor, however, most unjustly insisted on his serving him the remaining four months, under pretence of a contract. But no written agreement having been made and signed in presence of a field-cornet, which is required to bind a Hottentot to his employer for any stated time, the field-cornet discharged him for the present, without further explanation. Lebricht, after recovering his spirits, stated his case satisfactorily to us, and, on our return, I submitted it to the landdrost of Swellendam, who sent a proper reproof to the unjust Boor*." I wish Mr. Latrobe had furnished us with a copy of the note containing this "proper reproof," which he describes as having been sent to the unjust boor.

While a Hottentot is flogged, because he fails to prove charges brought against his master, which, according to the Dutch law, it requires two witnesses to establish, we see a Dutch boor, who had, in this instance, committed crimes, for which a Hottentot would have been flogged, and branded, and sent to work in irons, escaping with what Mr. Latrobe is pleased to term "a just reproof," which appears to have been sent in a note, that he had, perhaps, never seen, or, perhaps, in the form of a verbal message.

In a slave colony, the partiality which is naturally entertained by man for the whip, becomes one of the strongest passions in the human breast; and, for reasons which will afterwards be stated, the Hottentot

* Latrobe's Visit to South Africa, p. 122.

is more obnoxious to the ungovernable effects of this passion than the slave. The principle which induces the despot to prefer the obsequiousness of a nation of slaves to the independence and dignity of a free people, shuts the ears of the slave proprietor and the Hottentot master to all the advantages which can be urged in favour of free labour. He would find himself more in his element, and in a situation more congenial to his mind, with the coarsest fare, among a parcel of slaves and Hottentots, over whom he could exercise an uncontrolled authority, than the greatest affluence would afford him, in a situation where he could command no class of rational beings, over whom he could tyrannize.

The remark of Tacitus, that "there is nothing so sweet to man as the life of man," is not more severe, as a reflection on human nature, than it is just, as respects its accordance with truth; and any system, which proposes to substitute free labour in the place of slave labour, is as great a bugbear to the generality of men accustomed to treat a particular class of their fellow creatures as slaves, as the representative system of Great Britain, or of Portugal, is to Ferdinand of Spain and his advisers and masters, who would rather see a country converted into a desert, than the inhabitants breathing the air of freedom. The love of the chase in the breast of the sportsman is a weak passion, in comparison with the love of despotic authority in the breasts of men who have been accustomed to hunt down any class of their fellow creatures, as the gentlemen in England are accustomed to treat the game of the country.

It is alleged by the abettors and apologists of the

colonial system of oppression, in relation to the Hottentots and the other aborigines of the country, that corporal punishment is the only means by which they can be induced to labour. As these people are now placed among the colonists, having no other inducement to labour, there is, perhaps, some truth in this assertion ; but a temporary stimulus, in this case, is mistaken for a cure ; and it is forgotten that the continual use of strong medicines renders those under their operation incapable of being acted upon by more gentle ones. If the commands of a father are seldom given, except when accompanied with threats and blows, the son will come to think that he is never in earnest when these arguments are wanting.

While a complete refutation of this objection may be found, by a reference to the present state of our missionary institutions, I cannot close my remarks on this proclamation without adverting to the degrading influence of this system upon the Hottentot character. The vices of the Hottentots are the vices of their condition ; and they are generated and perpetuated by the very system which is pleaded as necessary for their cure. "A people," says a profound thinker, "are cultivated or unimproved in their talents, in proportion as those talents are employed in the practice of the arts and the affairs of society ; they are improved or corrupted in their manners, in proportion as they are encouraged and directed to act on the maxims of freedom and justice, or as they are degraded into a state of meanness and servitude." The Hottentot is in a worse condition than the slave : the system of oppression under which the Hottentot groans is attended with all the evils of the slave system ; and those evils, in

many instances, more aggravated in the virulence of their character, without any of those mitigating circumstances which have been urged in defence of common slavery. The only difference in favour of the condition of the Hottentot is, that he cannot, according to the institutions of the colony, be publicly bought and sold; but this difference is more in name than in reality, when it is recollected that he is at present nothing more than an object of patronage, a perquisite of office, a kind of transferable property; and that this circumstance, which makes him of less value to the master, subjects him to hardships, from which the common slave is, to a certain degree, exempted.

While all that the Hottentot gains, by being transferred from one master to another, is little more than the slave enjoys, on a West India plantation, in being transferred from under the jurisdiction of one overseer to that of another, the circumstance in the case of the Hottentot, that this transfer may be made, and the master lose his service, without any pecuniary indemnification, must lessen the interest the master feels in the well-being of the Hottentot, while he remains with him.

It is on this principle that the food of the Hottentot is generally of an inferior quality, and less in quantity than that allowed the slave—that he seldom has any medical assistance afforded him when he is sick—that the punishments inflicted upon him are in general more frequent and more severe than those inflicted upon the slave, the master sustaining no loss of property should his constitution sink under his hardships.

A gentleman from India, a friend of mine, had the following reason assigned by the keeper of an hotel in

Stellenbosch, for refusing him a chaise to carry him to Cape Town, in a very cold and wet day :—“ Had I,” said the host, “ a prize slave or a Hottentot, you should have had a chaise at once, but I have no one to drive you, excepting that slave (pointing to the man), and he might catch cold and die ; and it would be madness in me to run the risk of losing four thousand rix-dollars, which he cost me, for all that I have to receive for a stage of twenty-five miles.”

The following circumstance, related to me by a gentleman of the Madras civil service, now in England, as having taken place when he visited Pacaltsdorp, one of our missionary stations, will serve as a further illustration of this subject.

While he was reprobating the punishments of the Hottentots, a farmer, standing by, defended the system by pointing to a Hottentot who wanted one hand : “ I can assure you,” said the farmer, with great coolness, “ that Hottentot was good for nothing till the master with whom he then was chopped off his hand one day with an axe, and he has ever since been one of the most useful and industrious Hottentots in the country.” Had this Hottentot been a slave to the same master, it is questionable whether he would have adopted exactly the same method of improving his value.

Instances of oppression now in my possession, which might be adduced to illustrate this point, are sufficiently numerous to fill a volume ; but I shall content myself at present with the following, out of many cases, which came under my own observation.

A Hottentot woman, belonging to the missionary institution at Pacaltsdorp, in an advanced state of pregnancy, called upon me, at my own house in Cape Town,

to complain that her master had struck her, knocked her down, and kicked her in the side, and on the back, with his feet. Finding, by a medical inspection, that the woman's statement was correct, and that marks of her master's feet were visible on her body, I lodged a complaint against the master before his Majesty's deputy fiscal. On my complaint being lodged, the woman was taken from my house, according to the practice in respect to the Hottentots lodging complaints, and sent to the prison, to wait till the case should be investigated. Of delay I had no occasion to complain in this instance, for the case was heard next day. The facts having been proved, the master was found guilty of the charge exhibited against him.

There are several circumstances in this case deserving of notice. The master was a field-cornet, a petty magistrate in the district of George, and the Hottentot woman was a person of good character. It is proper, also, to add, that she was not a common servant; that she belonged to a missionary institution; and that she had been hired to attend the farmer's wife on this journey merely. The reader must, by this time, be anxious to hear the sentence pronounced upon this field-cornet, this functionary, for the brutality with which he had treated this defenceless woman; and when he considers the circumstances under which her case was brought to the notice of the deputy fiscal, he will scarcely be prepared to hear that the whole punishment inflicted upon this said field-cornet, was the annulling of the woman's engagement to him, together with a fine of five rix-dollars, being, in sterling money, seven shillings and ninepence. Contrary to the usual practice, the fine was allotted to the woman, (and this is the only in-

stance in which I ever knew such a thing having been done;) but this was all that was allowed her for the injury she had sustained, and to pay the expense of a residence in Cape Town of three weeks, waiting for an opportunity of returning home, and of a journey before her of two hundred-and-fifty miles. A slave master would have been in a very great passion indeed, before he would so far have lost sight of his interest as to have treated a female slave in this Hottentot's condition, as she was treated; and it is unnecessary to add that such a punishment as that inflicted upon the farmer, can afford no security to the Hottentot against the most horrible injuries.

The same cause, which leaves them without the aids of even a selfish sympathy in the service of their masters, deprives them of a protection which the slaves enjoy against the injuries to which they are exposed from strangers. The apprehension of the indignation of the master will, on many occasions, preserve the slave from maltreatment; but the Hottentot has no friend sufficiently interested in him to furnish him with a shield against bad usage; and such as are disposed to oppress him know this circumstance, and that they may trample upon him and his family with impunity.

On one of my visits to Bethelsdorp, I found a Hottentot who had been confined to his bed three months by contusions and cuts he had received on the head and the body, by stones and brickbats thrown at him as he was running round his own waggon in the street of Port Elizabeth, to avoid falling into the hands of a person who was pursuing him on purpose to beat him. The occasion of this assault was, I believe, because

the waggon of the Hottentot was not moved soon enough out of the way of one belonging to the assailant ; and I am sorry to say that the individual who did this unmilitary-like action was an officer of the British army, then on half-pay, and a local authority of the district. Had this Hottentot been a slave, his master might have got damages against the offender ; but the Hottentot had no one to take up his cause. Had any one, however, had the courage to incur the odium and dislike to which a prosecution would have subjected him, after infinite pains and trouble, a fine of a few rix-dollars would have been all the punishment which would have been inflicted in such a case ; and the fine, according to the colonial practice, would have gone to the district chest, and no part of it would have been allowed to the injured Hottentot.

Among many cases of oppression which came under my notice, when on a visit to Bethelsdorp in 1821, the following may be taken as a sample of the nature of the domestic correction to which the Hottentots are subject, and of the attention which is paid to their complaints. On the second day after my arrival at this institution, a Hottentot belonging to it, in the service of one Van Buuren, came to me and complained that he and another Hottentot belonging to Bethelsdorp had been severely flogged by his master ; the one for having asked leave to go to the institution on Sabbath-day to attend divine worship, and the other for having put water into an empty cask, of which he had drank himself, and of which he gave a share to some person standing by him. The young man who came and complained, had crept between four and five miles, (the distance from his master's to Bethelsdorp,) among the

bushes, that he might escape being detected and carried back to his master; and he stated that his fellow-servant was so much cut, that he was unable to move out of the place in which he slept. Having applied to Mr. Atherstone, a respectable surgeon at Uitenhage, and requested him to examine the wounds made on the young men, he sent me the following certificate.

(Copy)

“ Uitenhage, Nov. 3, 1821.

“ MY DEAR SIR,

“ At your request, I have this day visited the two Hottentots, Jan Geawint and Andreas Schieman. They have been flogged on the naked breech, and the instrument by which the punishment has been inflicted has cut through the *cutis vera* in both, on Jan Geawint in about four places, and on the other in about a dozen places: on one the punishment was inflicted the 28th October, on the other on the following day; and it is my opinion that three or four days must elapse before they can recover.

“ I am, &c. &c.,

(Signed)

“ J. ATHERSTONE,

“ To Dr. Philip,
Bethelsdorp.”

Surgeon, Member of the
Royal College of Surgeons, London.”

When Mr. Kitchingman, the missionary at the head of the institution, waited upon Mr. Van Buuren, he not only gave him no satisfaction, but he loaded him with oaths and curses, and told him that he would flog his Hottentot when and how he pleased, and that he might go and seek redress where he could find it.

I waited on Van Buuren a day or two after his interview with Mr. Kitchingman, and if he did not treat me with the same roughness, he had still enough of the

savage in his manners, to show me that it was not in that quarter in which I was to look for security or redress.

If such proceedings could take place with impunity so near a missionary institution, within a few miles of the seat of the chief magistrate of the district, and under his immediate eye, it is unnecessary to ask what must be the state of those who have no missionary to protect them, and who must travel long journies before they can bring their complaints to the ear of a landdrost.

This case, with many others of a similar character, was laid before the colonial government in Cape Town early in 1822; but no inquiry was ever instituted, no redress granted, and the system has proceeded, down to the time I left the colony, without any check.

Having shown the efficacious means employed to stifle even the complaints of the Hottentots, and their unprotected state in the service of the colonists, I must advert to another feature in their hard condition, which might have led us to suppose that the appellation of "*Free People*," bestowed upon them in the proclamations of the government, had been employed in cruel mockery, had we not known that it was intended to conceal from the British government, and the British public, the shocking state of slavery and oppression under which they have been placed.

When a Hottentot has given offence to his master, the master frequently sends him to the public prison, not to wait his trial, as such a proceeding would imply in England, and to have a punishment awarded him by a public magistrate, according to the nature of his crime, and the evidence of his guilt, but to be punished at the simple request of the master, without its

being necessary to exhibit any definite charge against the prisoner, or any other evidence of guilt than the testimony of the master.

The master has only to send a note along with the Hottentot, stating that this Hottentot (mentioning his name) has been insolent or disobedient; the master of the prison is requested to give him thirty-nine lashes, and the prisoner is tied up and flogged, and put into confinement till his master chooses to pay the prison expenses, and relieve him.

With such facts before us, can it be a question whether these poor people are treated like human beings?

Among the many hardships to which the Hottentot is subject by this proclamation, we must advert to the Law of Passes, contained in the 16th article. Every travelling Hottentot must have a pass, or a written permission signed by his master, or some local authority, stating that it is requested that the bearer (mentioning his name) be allowed to pass to a certain place. The pass may allow the Hottentot a day, or a week, or a month, or three months, as the person signing it may deem necessary. While he retains this pass, and while he is within the limits of the time which it allows him, it is his protection; but if he chance to lose his pass, or if the time granted in it has expired, he is liable to be treated as a vagabond, or as a deserter. England has its laws against vagabonds, but it will be seen by the sequel, that Cape law is not such as laws of that nature are in England—that it is not intended to protect the colonists, but to enslave the Hottentots.

There are liars and thieves among the Hottentots, but honesty, and a regard to truth, are prominent features in their national character, virtues which have not

been obliterated by the degraded state to which they have been reduced, and which furnish a striking contrast to the mendacious and pilfering habits prevalent among the slave population of the colony.

When the Hottentots were in a state of hostility against the farmers, as they were in the frontier districts at the time the English took possession of the colony, and till the mission of Dr. Vanderkemp commenced, there might be a propriety in such a regulation as the above, but if a necessity of the kind ever existed, it has long since ceased. But the real character of this regulation will be best seen by taking a brief view of its operation. As the practice, under this enactment now exists, it so happens, that if a Hottentot leave his home, he has no certainty of being permitted to return to it.

The Hottentot, having spent a night at the farmhouse, takes his departure in the morning: he is met a few miles distant by one of the same family, who demands a sight of his pass, and not being able to produce one, he is instantly dragged before the next field-cornet, and obliged to hire himself for a twelvemonth to a master. But it is seldom that so much address is employed, or that any regard is paid to appearances in cases of this nature. Two instances occurred to the Hottentots who accompanied me on my journey back to Cape Town in 1823, on their returning home, which I may here adduce in the way of illustration. One of these Hottentots, of the name of Willem, was knocked down upon the road, within fifty miles of Cape Town, and, after having had his pass taken from him, he was taken into custody, to be carried before a field-cornet, to be compelled to hire himself. In this instance the

oppressor was disappointed of his prey ; the young man escaped in the evening, and, travelling under the cover of night, he reached Cape Town, and made me acquainted with his case.

On the arrival of the party, three in number, in the district of George, a farmer came up to Marootz, a Bechuanna, and demanded his pass. The pass of this young man had been stolen from him on the road, and although he gave the most minute detail of the circumstances, and his statement was corroborated by his companions, he was struck by the farmer, knocked down, and trampled upon. This was not all. Martinus, another of the party, on coming up to expostulate with the farmer, who was beating and stamping upon Marootz, received a stroke on the leg, which lamed him ; and these young men were nearly three months at Pacaltsdorp, before they recovered from the wounds and bruises they had received. This case was laid before the chief magistrate, at my request, and, notwithstanding that an investigation was called for again and again, during the time the young men were recovering from these wounds, some pretext was always found for delaying it, till I was obliged to leave the colony.

A Hottentot I had in my own service a twelve-month came to me the day on which his contract expired, and informed me that he had served his time, and that he wished me to give him a pass. On inquiry into the reason why he wished to leave me, he stated that he had a wife and three children in the district of Graaff-Reinet, whom he had not seen for nine years—that he had come to Cape Town with cattle—that on his arrival in Cape Town he got a pass, to protect him on his journey—that he had lost his pass on the road

—that he was compelled to enter into contract with the person who had seized him, because he had not a pass —that he had been equally unfortunate in two or three attempts he had made to return home ; and that he hoped that I would give him a pass, which would protect him, and thereby furnish him with the means of seeing his wife and children. It was the first time he had made me acquainted with these circumstances, and I had no reason to doubt the correctness of his statement.

In the month of August, 1825, while at the missionary institution at Theopolis, a Hottentot, belonging to what was once the institution of Caledon, came to me, and related the following circumstances :—That he was hired by a gentleman of Cape Town, in 1821, at Swellendam, to accompany him on a journey to Albany ;—that on his arrival at Graham's Town, he was sent to the mouth of the Cowie, to take care of some cattle for a time, on an estate belonging to that gentleman ;—that his master having returned to Cape Town while he was in this employment, he obtained a pass from his agent ; —that his pass obliged him to go to Graham's Town ; —that the vendue master, on his arrival at Graham's Town, obliged him to enter into contract with him ;—that on demanding a pass from this master, to protect him on his journey home, he was desired to come to him next day ;—that on presenting himself next day, he was told that he would give him a pass to go to his father-in-law, and that he must either go and contract with him for a twelvemonth, or be sent to the prison ; —that after being eight months in the service of this father-in-law of the vendue master, unable longer to endure the cruel treatment he received, he had ab-

sconded from his service ;—that he had been living for some time in the bushes, feeding upon roots ; and that hearing from a Hottentot that I was at Theopolis, he had come from his hiding-place, to implore my assistance to free him from his present situation, and to procure a pass for him, that he might be permitted to return to a wife and three children he had left behind him at Caledon institution.

In the afternoon, if I mistake not, of the same day in which the Hottentot gave me the above statement, the master to whom he was under contract, and who was within a few miles of Theopolis, and had heard of the circumstance, sent me a message, stating that the Hottentot in question was his servant, and calling upon me, at the same time, to send him, under an escort, to his farm. On receiving this communication, I stated to the Hottentot that I could not protect him ; that all I could do for him was, to lay his case before the chief magistrate of the district, which I promised to do, provided he would return to Mr. B.'s service, till such time as the magistrate should have an opportunity of investigating and deciding upon his case. If he had received a sentence of death from the lips of a judge, he could not have felt more than he appeared to feel, when I stated to him the necessity he was under of returning to Mr. B.'s service ; but he acknowledged the justice of my observations, and left me with a promise that he would follow my advice with a manner which fully indicated that, but for his wife and children, he would have preferred death to life. On his departure, I gave him a letter to Mr. B., in which, after having given him an account of the complaints of the Hottentot, I informed him that I

should consider it my duty, on my arrival at Graham's Town, where I should be in the course of a few days, to lay the matter before Major Dundas, the landdrost of the district, and to call for an investigation. Being then on my last journey into the interior of Africa, and being pressed for time, I could not wait in the district till the affair should be settled, and I have not since heard of the result ; but, on my return to Cape Town, I waited on the gentleman who had hired him at Swellendam, and he corroborated to me every part of the statement of the Hottentot, so far as he, as an individual, was concerned.

It would certainly have given me great satisfaction to have heard that my efforts for this poor man had been successful, but my ignorance on this point does not affect the purpose for which it has been adduced. The fidelity and accuracy with which this Hottentot detailed what related to himself ; the many cases of a similar nature which had come under my observation ; the simplicity and consistency which pervaded the whole of his statement ; the keeping which was observable in all the answers he gave to the cross-questions put to him ; the situation of a man, placed as he was in relation to his family, were to me satisfactory vouchers for the truth of his heart-rending tale ; and affords a sufficient illustration of the great sufferings to which the Hottentot nation is exposed, by the law of Passes.

In the course of my remarks on this subject, I have ventured to intimate that this law, as it now stands, is not intended for the protection of the colonists against the aggressions of the Hottentots, and the following fact will suffice to show for what purpose it is actually employed.

On my visit to Theopolis in 1823, wishing to introduce the English language at that station, for the mutual benefit of the emigrants in Albany and the Hottentots themselves, I selected three or four Hottentot boys from the school, together with a young man who had been acting as an assistant in the school, and placed them under Mr. Mathews of Salem, to acquire a sufficient knowledge of the English language to fit them for assisting me in the introduction of the plan I proposed. Mr. Mathews was an emigrant from this country; he bore a very excellent character, and had at that time the most respectable school in the district under his care. Being himself a religious man, and favourable to the improvement of the Hottentots, he entered warmly into my views, and offered his services on the most moderate terms. A temporary house was to be erected adjoining the house of Mr. Mathews, by the Hottentots at Theopolis, for the accommodation of the little party; and when they were not in the school with Mr. Mathews, they were to be under the care of the assistant teacher, who was married to a respectable young woman, who was to take upon herself the domestic cares of the family. This plan was recommended by its cheapness, and other considerations which I need not specify. After a trial, Mr. Mathews reported very favourably of the dispositions, the talents, and the progress of his pupils; and the master and the scholars were mutually pleased with each other, and living in peace, when they were visited by two local functionaries who demanded their passes, and, finding they had none, they seized them as vagabonds. Mr. Mathews stated to them the circumstances under which they were placed: but neither the respectability of his character,

nor the remonstrances he employed, nor the tears and distress of the wife of the assistant and of the boys had any effect ; the determination was formed on principles not to be shaken by such circumstances. They were driven by the said local functionaries to Graham's Town, a distance of fifteen miles, as drovers in this country, on horseback, are in the habit of driving their cattle to Smithfield market ; and they were there committed to the common jail among the felons. Nor were they released till Mr. Mathews and one of the missionaries from Theopolis (which is upwards of thirty miles distant) appeared in person, to advocate their cause ; and at length, with great difficulty, prevailed in obtaining their discharge. Captain Hope was, at this time, acting landdrost at Graham's Town, and on being asked by a clergyman of the church of England how he could permit such treatment to the children at school, his reply was, "THE PRISON IS THE ONLY SCHOOL FOR HOTTENTOTS !"

CHAPTER IX.

Remarks on the Colonial Proclamation of 1812*.

HUME, in his Political Discourses, has an essay on three remarkable customs in three of the most celebrated governments that have existed in the world. If any future historian shall ever take the trouble to draw up a list of atrocious customs which have obtained the formalities and sanctions of law under a civilized government, the Cape proclamation of 1812 will certainly have, in such a record, a distinguished place assigned to it.

According to the laws of the ancient Druids, masters of families were kings, and had the power of life and death over their wives, children, and slaves. The Spartan laws regarded children as the property of the state, but the education given them was intended to prepare them for discharging the important duties of citizens, and the system had the sanction of the parents. The children of slaves are the property of their masters, and are, like the parents, at their disposal; but the case before us is of a character perfectly anomalous. The parents are acknowledged to be free, while they are liable to have their children torn from them, and disposed of without their concurrence.

By this proclamation a colonist can claim any child of a Hottentot who has been born upon his premises,

* For the Proclamation, see APPENDIX.

and who has arrived at the age of eight years, as an "apprentice" (to use the technical language of the colony) for ten years longer. It is difficult to say which is most to be deprecated, the injustice, the inhumanity or the pernicious consequences of this regulation.

What would be said of an attempt to introduce such a regulation in relation to the lower classes of society in this free country? Yet I know of no principle which could be urged in England against such a measure which may not be urged against its application to the families of Hottentots. The Hottentots do not fall below the inhabitants of Great Britain in the strength of their affections for their children; and, if you leave them to find a market for their own labour, they can provide for them with much more ease than the working classes in Europe can provide for their offspring. Deprived of his cattle, of the land of his fathers, of personal liberty, and of the protection of law, and left entirely at the mercy of those whose interest it is to oppress and cheat him in every way, to fill up the measure of his sufferings, he is liable to be robbed of his only earthly consolation, his children!

The pretext employed in the proclamation to justify this unnatural practice is, that it is necessary as an indemnification to the colonists for the support allowed to the children in their infancy. In reply to this argument, it may be remarked, in the words of Colonel Collins, "that the children are seldom weaned till they are two years of age, and that it is a well-known fact that they are turned to some useful purpose in the houses of the farmers as soon as they can crawl about; and it is a fact equally well known, that when they reside in the huts of their parents, they are chiefly and almost en-

tirely supported by them*." I have one case before me, in which a farmer, having lost his stock, was, with his family, for several years dependent upon the milk cows and the labour of a Hottentot family. While the farmer and his family continued in this state of dependence, the family of the Hottentot was, of course, treated with kindness; but with an alteration in his circumstances the temper of the farmer underwent a change, and, when the Hottentot proposed changing his place of residence, the *grateful* boor prevented him from executing his intention by going to the next magistrate and getting the children of the Hottentot apprenticed to him.

The Hottentot looks in vain for a method to escape from the operation of this cruel law. If, by changing his service, he eludes the claims of the farmer, he falls into the hands of the local authorities of the district. His unfortunate situation reminds us of the threatening—"If they escape from the weapons of iron, the bow of steel strikes them through." The pretext that the law is designed to prevent the children of the Hottentots from being exposed to the danger of starvation, may have imposed upon the distinguished individual under whose authority it was issued; but every one acquainted with the state of the colony must be satisfied that this pretext is entirely fallacious. The Hottentots at the missionary institutions not only provide for their own children, but it frequently happens that, in addition to their own families, they provide for the destitute children of others. Indeed, this charitable disposition is carried so far; that the missionaries are never

* Colonel Collins's Report to Government.

troubled in providing for the orphans of the Hottentots at their institutions, the distant relatives and neighbours of such children being always ready to adopt them, and provide for them. Do away with the iniquitous restrictions under which this people are placed, and allow them to have the means of obtaining a fair price for their labour, and their affection for their offspring will do all that is required for their preservation.

Another plea which has been urged in defence of this system, namely, that Hottentots are deficient in kindly affections to their children, is as false in fact, as it is opposite to sound principles of philosophy. The passions and instincts necessary for the preservation of the human species are little dependent upon the reasonings and refinements of men, and are often more strongly evinced in the lowest than in the highest grades of society. Can we suppose, for a moment, that the Author of our nature, who has imparted to the most timid brutes an attachment to their young, which makes them boldly risk their lives in their defence, should leave any portion of our race, in their more helpless condition, without a provision for them affording an equal security? It is, on the contrary, natural to suppose that the oppressions of the parents should rather increase than lessen their attachment to their children; and, in point of fact, the Hottentots in general are remarkable for an excess of affection for their offspring. The separations of parents and children, indeed, have furnished the most heart-rending scenes that I have witnessed in South Africa; and, in a letter now before me, from a respectable individual in the colony, on this very subject, the writer, after expressing the most unqualified censure of this proclamation,

as the occasion of more degradation and misery than, perhaps, any other instrument of oppression in existence, adds—"Heart-rending, indeed, are the woeful lamentations I often hear from Hottentot mothers about the loss of their children."

The colour of justice given to this measure, under the pretence that it is intended as an indemnification to the farmer, vanishes before the simple fact, that the local magistrate may, at his pleasure, set aside the claims of the farmer, and dispose of the children to others, a case which often occurs, without allowing the legal claimant any remuneration. According to the proclamation, not only is the child to be apprenticed to the person who has maintained it, and with whom, therefore, the parents have lived eight years and upwards, and to whom they, perhaps, might feel less repugnance; but, as if it were determined to place the whole Hottentot population at the mercy of the officers of government, and, at all events, to oppress the people, it is provided, in the last clause of this article, that "the landdrost is authorized to bind such Hottentot unto such other humane person within his district, &c." No notice whatever is taken by the colonial law, let it be observed, of the Hottentot parents: the landdrost is vested with this formidable control, and that, too, without the least regard to the feelings or the rights of a parent over his offspring, or of the feelings of the child in this forcible abstraction from its parents.

From a provision in this proclamation, binding the farmer to have the births of the children born on his premises registered, it may be supposed that there can be no imposition respecting the ages of the children. Whatever the cause may arise from, I am sorry to

say that the supposition is at variance with facts ; and I have frequently had my attention called to cases in which young people, who had arrived at the ages of fourteen and sixteen years, have been rated, at that period of life, as being eight years of age only, and then apprenticed for ten years. In one case of this nature, after being assured by the local authorities of the district that an apprenticed boy was not more than eight years of age, I proved, by the evidence of the farmer at whose place he was born, that he was fifteen years of age at the very time he was apprenticed by them as a child not exceeding eight years of age. This fact, however, would not have been so easily established, if it had not been that the magistrate had used his dispensing power in this case, in taking the boy from the farmer with whom the father lived, and in giving him to another, who had no other claim upon him, than that with which the magistrate invested him. There was no charge of inhumanity brought against the master from whom he was taken, and, what aggravated this case, the boy was taken from his former master against his own inclination and the wishes of his father ; and yet this separation was made by one of the most humane and kind-hearted magistrates in the colony.

In countries, where one class of beings consider another as of an inferior race, such incongruities pass unnoticed, and they are never regarded as inconsistencies among those that have had the misfortune to have been brought up in the midst of such prejudices. It has been justly remarked by an eminent writer, that, although by the institution of different societies, unequal privileges are bestowed on their members, and although

justice itself requires a proper regard to such privileges, yet he who has forgotten that men were originally equal, easily degenerates into the slave, or, in the capacity of a master, is not to be trusted with the rights of his fellow creatures.

I have now before me the case of two girls, residing at the institution of Bethelsdorp, who were claimed by two farmers, on the authority of this proclamation. The farmers stated these girls to be the one eleven, the other twelve years of age; and on this ground their services were claimed for six and seven years. The eldest girl, alleged to be only twelve years of age by the farmer, appearing to the missionary not to be under twenty-four, and the youngest not much less, he considered it his duty to make the landdrost, Colonel Cuyler, acquainted with this gross imposition. The landdrost, after receiving the statement of the missionary, still persisted, nevertheless, in supporting the unjust claims of the colonists, and reiterated his demand that the young women should be given up to him. An appeal was then made to the colonial government in favour of the girls, by the missionary, containing circumstantial details. No attempt was made by the colonial government to controvert this statement; but the only communication which he received in answer to his appeal, was a confirmation of an official note received from Colonel Cuyler, stating that no Hottentots were to be received into the institution of Bethelsdorp, without a permission, in writing, signed by that functionary. And thus the exemplary conduct of the missionary, which had well entitled him to the approbation of the colonial government, was the occasion of depriving the institution and the oppressed Hotten-

tots of the district of one of their most invaluable privileges.

The clause in the proclamation now before us, which has a reference to the humanity of the persons to whom the young Hottentots are to be apprenticed, was no doubt benevolently intended by the respectable nobleman under whose authority it was issued; but it is in reality worse than useless, since it conceals, under a colour of sympathy for the injured party, an act fraught with the greatest injustice and inhumanity.

A certain landdrost in the colony has taken to himself the credit of this proclamation; and he often reminds the boors, with much self-complacency, that they have him to thank for the advantages which they derive from it. Had this individual kept his own secret, from its very character it might have been supposed to have proceeded from such a quarter, from the immense patronage it throws into the hands of the local authorities. It is to this source that we are to look for an explanation of the care that is required to be exercised as to the humanity of the masters to whom the young Hottentots were to be apprenticed. Some plausible pretext was necessary, if it had been for nothing more than to blind the eyes of the governor, before any hope could be entertained that he might be induced to lend his name and authority for such an object; and this is not the only instance in which the most honourable names have been prostituted to cover an assumption of power at variance with the dearest rights of justice and humanity.

Among other evils resulting from this proclamation, it must be obvious, on the slightest reflection, that the act which disposes of the children in this manner must,

generally speaking, perpetuate the slavery of the parents and of the whole family, reaching in many cases from one generation to another. In a journey which I made into the interior of the colony in 1825, I lodged two nights at the house of a respectable farmer, who had a number of Hottentots in his service, that had belonged to the missionary station of Zuurbrack before it was broken up in consequence of the measures pursued by the colonial government. Pointing to one family, consisting of ten brothers, the greater part of them born on the missionary institution, he remarked to me with great simplicity, "That family, sir, is my wealth: they are better to me than slaves, for they cost me nothing; and I shall have them apprenticed to me till they are twenty-five, perhaps till they are twenty-nine years of age, and perhaps I may be able to keep them for ever."

Among the many evils arising from the proclamation, one of the greatest still remains to be considered. As early impressions are the most abiding, and as the future character is formed in early life, the habits acquired during these ten years' bondage, must stick to the individual during life; and a very serious question arises out of these circumstances, namely, what are the habits the young Hottentots are likely to acquire during this servitude? The principle on which the parents are treated worse than the common slaves, places the children of the Hottentots in a worse condition than that of the slave children. Under the influence of those selfish feelings, which it is the tendency of the system to generate and strengthen, the masters do not feel that interest in them which they do in a marketable property; and the consequence is, that the young Hot-

tentots about the farm-houses, generally speaking, exhibit much stronger marks of degradation and wretchedness than the young slaves of their own age. This remark is applicable to both sexes ; but the condition of the young Hottentot females is especially to be deplored. Exposed as they are, often without the protection of their parents, and mixed with a slave population, from fourteen to eighteen, twenty or twenty-five, years of age, their moral degradation is almost inevitable ; and what has a young woman left, when her virtue and respectability are gone ? Were this the only evil feature of the proclamation, it would be bad enough to render it a disgrace to any country ; and for all the mischievous effects to which it gives rise, it does not present a single particle of compensation to the injured parties. That they might have been in situations equally bad, is certainly no apology for having placed them by law in the very worst possible condition. The former supposition is, however, far from being applicable to the young females at the missionary institutions. Many of them, no doubt, at those stations, as is equally the case with many women in the most favourable circumstances in civilized countries, may turn out ill ; but I am borne out by facts which have come under my own observation, when I state, that a large proportion of the young women at our institutions are extremely well brought up ; and that their manners and their whole appearance form a striking contrast to the female apprentices in the houses of the colonists.

It was once remarked to me by one of the most intelligent magistrates in the Cape colony, that “ the proclamation of 1812 has sealed the degradation of the Hottentots. It is,” he added, “ one of the most infamous

public acts that ever disgraced any country; the evils to which it gives rise are incalculable; and for the honour of the country, as well as from a principle of humanity towards this oppressed people, who are writhing under its cruel and debasing operation, I cordially wish to see it repealed."

The following abstract of a case which has been communicated to me, with all its melancholy and moving details, by the intelligent and respectable individual who acted such a creditable and humane part to the distressed family whose fate it involved, will serve to furnish an illustration of the use and abuse of this proclamation. In this case a farmer purchases an aged slave, on the understood arrangement between the buyer and the seller, that the purchaser was to have in servitude the wife of the slave, a Hottentot woman, and her five children, notwithstanding that they were well able to support themselves, and that two of the children were already in the employment of a third party. The claim is at first disallowed by the landdrost, apparently more from caprice than from any sense of its injustice, and two of the children (boys) are permitted to enter into the service of other persons. The purchaser of the slave, however, afterwards emerges from a state of poverty and insignificance: he becomes a wealthy man, and is appointed a heemraad. With the alteration of his circumstances the magistrate's view of his claim is likewise altered. He is now permitted to take by force into servitude two of the daughters away from the mother. He renews his pretensions to enthrall the whole family, and in this he is now countenanced and supported by the landdrost, who actually produces the books kept for the purpose of registering apprentices, to show that

all the five children had been apprenticed to this boor some years ago, though he formerly resisted his unjust claim, and notwithstanding that some of the children were then below the age fixed for their being apprenticed by the government proclamation. The new heemraad next endeavours to get possession of one of the sons, who was hired, under contract, to a gentleman in the neighbourhood. In this attempt, he is more than seconded by the landdrost, who, instead of employing his influence and official authority in repressing such a shameful proceeding, converts them into an engine of oppression, and tries, by every artifice of cunning and intimidation, to induce this gentleman to surrender the boy to the farmer. Fortunately, he had an independent and resolute person to deal with, who resisted and baffled all his attempts to carry his point; and, in the end, the boy was permitted to remain and serve out his time with this gentleman. Defeated in his attempts to enslave the whole family, the rancour of the merciless boor was directed against the father, who was his purchased slave. He had driven away the wife, when he found he could make nothing more of her and her children, from her usual place of abode, alleging that her remaining in the neighbourhood induced his slave (her husband) to visit her, which he would not allow; and, on one occasion in particular, (besides being in the habit of maltreating both the slave and his wife,) when she went to see her husband, who was sick, he beat her with such brutal violence, as to leave the marks on her body for a long time afterwards; and this for no other reason than because he found her visiting her husband, whom he had doomed to perish, and to whom this inhuman master said, “*that he was*

paid for, and might die, as his life was of no consequence to him." The slave was at last incapacitated by age and sickness from further exertion, but, even in this extremity, the master would allow neither the wife nor children to visit or administer to the wants of this unfortunate old man. He remained, therefore, helpless and forlorn in his solitary hut, labouring under the weight of age, lameness by palsy, and a violent attack of gravel. Deprived of assistance, in excruciating pain, he was sinking fast, when his master presented himself, repeating his former doom, that he should perish, and adding, with insulting pride, that "he was paid for." He then asked why his wife and children did not redeem him. When the poor slave requested to know what this meant, he was told that his wife and children had plenty of cattle, and might very well spare a team of oxen, with which they might purchase his freedom. The slave sent the message to his wife, who immediately hastened to collect ten oxen, and presented them as a ransom for her dying husband. But the master was not satisfied with them, and wanted to have the pick of all their cattle. The slave was now sinking fast, and a few days afterwards his rapacious and inhuman master sent a message to inform his wife, that he would next day remove the old slave to a distant farm of his, and that if she wanted to redeem him, she must conclude the bargain that day. In haste the wife and her relatives collected their oxen, borrowed some others, and, having purchased the liberty of the poor old man, they brought him to the house of the respectable individual who related to me this case. A medical gentleman, distinguished for his professional skill and humanity, was sent for, but

his endeavours were in vain: by a cruel and wilful neglect on the part of his late owner, his disease had become incurable. All that could be done was to alleviate his misery by a surgical operation. Mortification had commenced, and a few days afterwards he expired in the arms of his wife and children, listening to a hymn which he had requested them to sing.

The following remarks, furnished by the gentleman who favoured me with the affecting details of this case, will be read with interest:—"What injustice," observes he, "has been done to the character of the Hottentot people, by representing them as scarcely possessed of a human mind! Here we see a woman sacrificing the prime of her life to nurse and comfort her husband, whose hard fate it was not only to be a slave, but the slave of an inhuman master. We see the same woman exposing herself to hardships and brutal treatment, in order to console him under the miseries beneath which he was sinking. When death, the last and best friend of slaves, was rapidly approaching, and no hopes could be entertained of a continuance of life to the sufferer, this faithful and affectionate Hottentot woman, and her children, into whom she had instilled her own sentiments, hastened cheerfully to sacrifice their hard-earned property to purchase the few hours of remaining life, in which they might minister, without molestation, to the comfort of the dying husband and father! And will any rational person then venture to affirm, with these details before him, that the two daughters, seized by this farmer, and constrained to serve him, under the sanction of the magistrate's authority, will be brought up better than they would have been with such a mother?"

It is, indeed, deeply to be lamented that the English government should have thus sealed the degradation of the Hottentots, and signed its own disgrace, by giving a legal sanction to the very worst grievance of the Dutch system; and which has been justly stigmatized by Barrow, in the following passage in his Travels:—"By a resolution of the old government, as unjust as it was inhuman, a peasant was allowed to claim as his property, till the age of five-and-twenty, all the children of the Hottentots in his service, to whom he had given, in their infancy, a morsel of meat."*

Before concluding this chapter, I shall add a few strictures on the *Opgaaf* tax, which was first levied on the Hottentots at the missionary institutions in 1814, in consequence of a proclamation issued that year, as it adds considerably to the grievances endured by this unfortunate race.

The proclamation of Sir John Craddock, regulating and fixing the rate of the colonial taxes, was published on the 1st of April 1814, and the first intimation to the missionaries at Bethelsdorp, informing them that the Hottentots in the missionary institutions were to be taxed on the same principles, and according to the same rate, as the colonial inhabitants, was communicated to them in a letter from Colonel Cuyler, the landdrost of Uitenhage, to Mr. Read, dated Sept. 1814.

The manner in which the Hottentots were collected at Bethelsdorp, under Dr. Vanderkemp, has been already related. The population of the settlement, at its commencement, was composed of Hottentots who

* Barrow's Travels, vol. i., p. 95.

had been previously in a savage state, and who lived chiefly by plunder. The lands of Bethelsdorp were granted to Dr. Vanderkemp for the purpose of beginning an institution to attempt to reclaim and civilize the wandering hordes of this people at that time in the district of Uitenhage. Bethelsdorp is a dry place, and can seldom be cultivated with advantage : it was not selected by Dr. Vanderkemp, as has been erroneously stated by certain writers and travellers : it was assigned to him, as we have shown, as a temporary residence, until a better place should be fixed upon ; but the promises of the colonial government on this point were never fulfilled, and his attempts to procure a more suitable place proved fruitless.

This mission has been continued at Bethelsdorp by the will of the colonial government, and not by any fault of the missionaries. In fact it is evident, from the letter of Sir John Craddock to Mr. Campbell *, and from the whole of the conduct of government in regard to Bethelsdorp and the other institutions, that it was the design of the colonial government that the Hottentots should not be placed in situations where they could provide effectually for themselves, or become any thing better than servants to the colonists. This will more distinctly appear from the following extracts of a correspondence between Mr. Read and Colonel Cuyler on this subject, and upon which I shall take the liberty of making some comments.

Mr. Read, finding that it was determined that the Hottentots at the Bethelsdorp institution should be taxed according to the rule fixed for the colonial popu-

* See APPENDIX.

lation, after apologizing for what he was about to say, goes on to state his objections, in the following terms :—“ In the first place, we are sorry that the year has so far elapsed before this information has been communicated. The scarcity of the times is well known in this part of the country. The failure of our last harvest, and the loss of five hundred head of cattle towards the end of the last year and the commencement of this, owing to the want of grass, render the people quite unprepared for such an opgaaf. The scattered state of the people is likewise a very unfavourable circumstance, insomuch that we fear, before the present opgaaf could terminate, the one for 1815 would commence ; so that, in about six or seven months, nearly seven thousand rix-dollars will have to be paid by the Hottentots of this institution—a thing, we believe, impossible.” Having stated the above objections, he proceeds, in his own name and in the name of his fellow-missionaries, to make the following reasonable request :—“ Another circumstance we hope government will take into consideration, namely, that Bethelsdorp has always been a receptacle for worn out and helpless people from different parts of the country. These people have been, in part, supported by collections made on Sundays by our people, until some months ago, when their number and circumstances became so distressing, that we were obliged to have recourse to friends at the Cape, to whose liberality we are greatly indebted. The number supported, either by private or public charity, is upwards of thirty-six, besides orphans.”—“ We hope government will exempt such individuals from the required opgaaf. In the account of cattle which we had the honour to trans-

mit to you, we made a return including even the cattle belonging to the missionary society, as likewise the cattle belonging to the missionaries allowed by the society for their support. We humbly hope government will exempt the missionaries from the expenses of the above opgaaf, otherwise they will have to apply to the society for additional support." To this statement and request, government made the following reply:—
"His Excellency sees nothing in Mr. Read's remonstrances which should prevent the missionary establishment of Bethelsdorp from paying the same proportion of taxes which is charged to the other inhabitants of your district."

Now, without adverting to that part of Mr. Read's plea respecting the sick, the aged, the infirm, and the orphans, and with the other circumstances only of this case before me, I am not a little surprised, that government should have come to this conclusion, and that such an answer should have been sent to the remonstrances of the missionary. Allowing that land, moveable property, and wages, are legitimate subjects of taxation, on what principle can it be affirmed that people without any land, excepting the common ground allowed for a missionary institution, and without any moveable property bearing any comparison to the property of the colonists in the district, should be assessed according to the rate at which the boors are taxed; and that a people not possessing one-eightieth part of the land of the district, even accounting the land of the institution as their own property, should be compelled to pay one-twelfth, or one-fourteenth, of the taxes collected in that district?

The injustice of this tax will be still more evident,

when the amount of wages received by the Hottentots is compared with the sum they have to pay, in direct taxes, to government. In the official report of Colonel Collins to government, in 1809, he states, "that in the distant parts of the colony a male Hottentot receives no more in the year than twelve or fourteen rix-dollars, which may be paid in money, clothes, or cattle. A female obtains much less." In 1815, no addition had been made to the wages of the Hottentots; and it will be seen, before this statement is closed, that their wages amongst the farmers, even in the heart of the colony, and not two hundred miles from Cape Town, are still continued with very little improvement in the rate. By the roll of the opgaaf, now lying before me, for 1815, I find that the Hottentots at Bethelsdorp, who paid the opgaaf that year, amounted to four hundred and twenty-six souls, and that the whole sum collected by the opgaaf amounted to three thousand four hundred and fifteen rix-dollars, five skillings, and four stivers; making the proportion paid by each individual eight rix-dollars and a fraction. Is there any proportion between twelve or fourteen rix-dollars yearly, which is the common wages of a Hottentot, and the burthen borne by that individual, when he has to pay two-thirds of that sum to government in direct taxes?

The following extract of a letter from Mr. Joubert, missionary at the institution of Zoar, belonging to the South African Missionary Society, in the district of Swellendam, will set this matter in a clearer light than any reasoning that can be employed on this subject. It is dated the 27th June, 1822. "We are here at present in a very distressing situation, the half of the

inhabitants being unable to pay their taxes to government. They are all appointed to appear at the drostdy the 2d of next month, in order to pay their taxes, with a fine; a single person must pay seven rix-dollars, four skillings; and a married couple ten rix-dollars; or, in case of inability to pay, must go to prison. If our crops should fail a second time, a famine will be the dreadful consequence. Wheat is not to be procured here for less than thirty rix-dollars per muid;* rye is twenty rix-dollars, and barley ten rix-dollars; and the pay of a Hottentot, in this quarter, is from twelve skillings to two rix-dollars per month."

The following statement may be introduced here, to anticipate any remarks which may be made respecting the resources of the Hottentots, to lessen the oppressive character of this tax; it is taken from a letter of Dr. Vanderkemp's to the colonial government, dated 3d April, 1807:—"The number of Hottentots belonging to this institution (Bethelsdorp), since 1802, is twelve hundred and sixty-seven, including women and children. From these deduct three hundred who are now at Bethelsdorp, fifty who may be in the military service, a few who died or lately emigrated to Cafferland, and the remainder, amounting to at least eight hundred, will be found among the boors."

I have no statement of the same nature up to 1814; but as no new means of subsistence were furnished to the people in the intervening period, we are warranted in concluding that Bethelsdorp furnished as great a proportion of its inhabitants to the boors in 1814 as it did in 1807. Deducting the fifty accounted for by

* A muid is a measure containing three Winchester bushels.

death and emigration, twelve hundred and seventeen remain, fifty of whom are in the army. As these fifty soldiers were healthy, and probably young men, the compulsory abstraction of such a number must have had a distressing influence on the institution, keeping in mind that those drafted for the Cape regiment generally leave their wives and children, and all their aged and infirm relatives, at the missionary institutions.*

To the facts now brought forward, and the remarks made upon them, I may add, that this tax is confined in its operations to the Hottentots at the missionary institutions; and that it is a direct tax upon the institutions, from which Hottentots who are living among the farmers, and who are not members of a missionary institution, are exempted. Were this tax levied upon those Hottentots only who have procured waggons, or who had the means of making money besides what is to be made in the service of the farmers, it would be liable to less objection; but what can be said in palliation of an impost which is made to bear with such an intolerable pressure upon the Hottentots belonging to our institutions, while others are exempted from its operations?—Why single out

* We cannot suppose that there could be many effective men in the three hundred Dr. Vanderkemp mentions as having been left at Bethelsdorp. Taking all these circumstances into consideration, and admitting that the statement of Dr. Vanderkemp in 1807 may be taken as a standard for 1814, it is a matter of surprise, how a people, receiving from twelve to twenty rix-dollars per annum, could afford to pay, within a few months, the opgaaf for two years, amounting to sixteen rix-dollars, one stiver, and four-sixths. It is not surprising that Mr. Read should have declared, on the proposal of the opgaaf, that it was impossible; but the wonder is, how government could think it possible.

the poor creatures who have their names on the roll of a missionary, as the only victims for such oppression?

Mr. Joubert having mentioned that the Hottentots of his institution were summoned to the drostdy on the 1st July, 1822, to pay their opgaaf, adds that, in default of payment, they must go to prison. Looking over that letter, and remarking that half the people in the institution were unable to pay their opgaaf, a question will naturally arise—What is government to do with these people—how is payment to be enforced—and what good can be done by sending so many people to prison? This mystery will be explained by a very few words. When the people are called to the drostdy, and cannot pay their taxes, there are always a number of the colonists present, who are ready to pay their taxes for them, on condition of their being bound to them for a year's service. The Hottentots, having no alternative but to go to prison, or enter into the service of the boors, generally prefer the latter.

It is unnecessary to attempt to prove that it is not the intention of the local authorities on such occasions to fill the prisons of the country; and whether or not it was the original intention of the colonial government to oppose the institutions, and force the Hottentots into the service of the farmers by this tax, there cannot be a question but that its direct tendency is to do both. It is impossible to look at the retrospective view of this tax; at the mode of its collection; at its commencement calling for two years' taxes within a few months; at the disproportion there is between the property and wages of a Hottentot, and the amount of the taxes required from him; at the partial manner

in which the tax is levied, by confining it to the missionary settlements, and the consequences resulting from it, as exhibited in Mr. Joubert's letter, and in the remarks in the concluding part of these observations; and not to ask, as it concerns the Hottentots, which is the greater,—the impolicy or the injustice of this obnoxious tax?

CHAPTER X.

Effects of Dr. Vanderkemp's Death on the Missions.—Mr. Campbell's first Visit.—Second Deputation.—Condition of Bethelsdorp.—Schools.—Shops.—Mechanics.—General Remarks.—Address to the People.—State of Religion.—Improvements.

WITHOUT reflecting on the missionaries who survived Dr. Vanderkemp, we cannot suppose that his removal could happen without seriously affecting the prosperity of the mission. It is obvious from his correspondence, that Dr. Vanderkemp always considered the colonial government as favourably disposed towards the Hottentots, and that he viewed them as misled by the misrepresentations of the colonists and the local authorities of the districts. He never seems to have considered the opposition he had to encounter as a part of the colonial system. His mistake, in this instance, may be easily accounted for. The fear inspired by his abilities obliged the officers of government to conceal, as much as possible, their real views; and, in their answers to his representations, they either affected to disapprove of what could not be defended, or they attempted to make him believe that the indefensible case was an exception to a general rule; while the circumscribed sphere of his operations, which allowed him little opportunity of seeing the working of the system, except in his own case, and the remoteness of his situation from the seat of government, contributed their

different portions of influence to prevent him from discovering the universality of those feelings, which were viewed by him as merely local in their operation. This limitation of his views did not, however, render him less fit for the situation he then filled. A more perfect knowledge of the system might, perhaps, have proved unfavourable to the continuance of his exertions, and the final triumph of his principles; and it is probable that had he been acquainted with all the difficulties in his undertaking, it would have been abandoned in despair. While Dr. Vanderkemp lived, the missions and the aborigines found an able defender; after his death, the missions fell into a state of confusion, which furnished their enemies with the opportunity they had long wished for to successfully assail them.

In 1812, it was judged expedient by the London Missionary Society to send a deputation to South Africa, to examine into the state of the different stations, and to report upon them; and for this duty they selected the Rev. John Campbell, who has since given to the public the result of his observations during several journeys into the interior of the colony, as well as among the interesting tribes beyond the frontier. But of this period we shall have occasion to speak hereafter, when we come to give the history of the several new stations founded by Mr. Campbell. In the mean time we shall proceed to offer some account of the improvements made by the Hottentots at Bethelsdorp, where the success of the missionaries, notwithstanding the numerous difficulties and oppressions they have had to contend with, has set the question regarding the possibility of civilizing the aborigines of South Africa at rest for ever.