

perceived, some ideal disappointment is supposed to be met with, something, in fine, which causes the mind to fall short of that happiness of which it had formed a distant and illusive prospect. The cause of that contentment and cheerfulness of mind so often conspicuous among the very lowest orders of the people, must be traced to the same source, to the feelings, the predilections, the attachments of the mind, the force of habit, and the assimilation of their ideas to their situation. A person may form a just estimate of what a poor African must feel at being for ever separated from all he held dear, by imagining himself placed in his situation. To render the human mind for ever miserable, by doing violence to its feelings, is the extreme of cruelty. It is, as far as in us lies, an act of homicide committed on the soul of man; but ambition and avarice have at all times sported, not only with the interests, but the feelings of mankind. This shocking, but important reflection, I shall at present leave to the consideration of my friend. Adieu.

LETTER XIX.

Of the capture of Constantinople in 1454, when the citizens were carried into slavery—This similar to the case of the negroes—Their condition represented less deplorable by some, and perhaps exaggerated by others—The state of slavery in America varies in different places—In some it is more tolerable than in others—The negro slaves in Mexico far more comfortable than those elsewhere—Representations consequently partial, inaccurate, and contradictory—Conclusions must be drawn from leading facts and general observations—The evil consequences of the slave-trade illustrated by only one circumstance—The sufferings of the Africans incontrovertibly proved by their depopulation—Enquiries into this unparalleled destruction of the human species.

AN inhabitant of civilized Europe cannot read, without shuddering with horror, the melancholy account given by Phranza of the memorable capture of Constantinople by assault, A. D. 1454, when the persons, as well as the property of the inhabitants,

were given up to the army by Sultan Mahomet II., in consequence of the rash courage and obstinate valor of the Emperor Constantine Paleologus, who to the last refused the most honorable and advantageous terms of capitulation, and bravely fell in defending the breach through which the Turks entered the city. Phranza, who being one of the principal officers of the court of Constantinople, was an eye-witness of the whole, and himself a sufferer in the general calamity, relates that the citizens, without any distinction of age, sex, or rank, were dragged from their hiding places, especially from the church of St. Sophia, into which vast numbers had crowded, and being chained together like beasts, were driven through the streets, and carried into slavery. The imagination may conceive some kind of general idea of the horrid scene, but it is impossible to describe the feelings of the unhappy victims. My friend is ready to say within himself, "how shocking would such a spectacle appear in any European city with which we are acquainted;" and if we were in Africa, and should see the bands of
negroes

negroes collected from different quarters of the interior by merciless tyrants; husbands torn from their wives, and wives from their husbands; parents from their children, and children from their parents; and all promiscuously delivered up to the slave-merchants, who string them together like horses, and then conduct them to the sea-coast; if we should see all this, could the imagination of man paint a scene of greater horror? What arrows of heart-rending anguish must trans-pierce the soul of an unfortunate African thus torn from his native country, from his paternal home, from all his endearments, from every object of his affection, and carried into perpetual and irremediable slavery! What powers of eloquence can express, or what vigor of imagination conceive the soul-rending reflections which must torture an unfortunate wretch in whose breast are concentrated all the subjects of corroding grief that can prey upon the mind? If we follow him to the plantations, will the picture exhibit more pleasing colors? Will his condition there afford a brighter, a more enlivening prospect? Can imperious commands, toilsome

toilsome labor and coarse food, afford him any consolation, or make him forget his family, his friends, and his native country? or can the whip of the task-master extinguish reflection? Alas! it may banish it for a moment, but it will constantly return, and with redoubled force. Some, in their descriptions of negro slavery, through interested motives, or in consequence of superficial observation, represent the condition of slaves' in the colonies as less deplorable than is generally imagined; while others, through an excess of humanity, may perhaps exaggerate, if it be possible to exaggerate, the evils they endure; and no doubt local circumstances may authorize different opinions in these particulars.

The state of slavery in America and its dependancies, as it is the case in every circumstance of human condition, varies in different places, and in respect of different individuals. In the Spanish settlements in Terra Firma, on the Rio de la Plata, but above all in Peru and Mexico, the condition of the negroes is considerably more tolerable than in the islands. Peru and Mexico being
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the source of wealth, and centre of luxury, dissipation, and indolence, a greater number of negroes are employed as domestics in those countries than in the islands; and the mines, as I mentioned in a former letter, being wrought by corvies of Indians, negroes are seldom employed in that laborious work. Both Mexico and Peru contain several great cities, where many of the inhabitants, both Spaniards and Creoles, live in a very luxurious manner, in regard to parade and ostentatious shew, which obliges them to keep a great number of domestics, who are mostly negroes, and lead a far more easy and comfortable life, than those who labor in the plantations. Of all the cities of the modern world, perhaps Mexico is that in which the inhabitants live in the most extravagant style of luxury, and ostentatious parade. This luxury, like that of ancient Rome, is a circumstance extremely favorable to the slaves, by causing them to be employed in the houses of the great and opulent, and to compose a great part of their retinue; and all the writers who treat of the European settlements, describe the condition.

condition of the negro slaves in Mexico as far more comfortable than that of those in any other part of the new world.

In the examination of a system of so complicated a nature, and so extensive an operation, involving such a number of particulars, and subject to so many variations, owing to local and changeable circumstances, no just conclusions can be drawn from particular cases, the representations of which will always be partial, inaccurate, and contradictory,

In reasoning upon this, as upon every other circumstance of ancient or modern history, we must be contented to conclude from leading facts and observations of a general nature. Every situation of human life admits of unbounded variety, being influenced by a thousand external and adventitious circumstances impossible to enumerate, and scarcely any thing can happen so disastrous, as not to be ultimately beneficial to some. The greatest public calamities, even war, pestilence, famine, earthquakes, &c. redound to the profit of some individuals; but we ought not for that reason the
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less to deprecate these destructive and calamitous events; and if the state of slavery has proved a fortunate circumstance to some particular persons in that situation, it is no argument in its favor, and can neither palliate the horrors of the system, nor justify its existence.

Proceeding, therefore, upon general principles and general views, it will suffice to instance only one circumstance of the slave-trade, which sufficiently displays in the most conspicuous and striking manner, the dreadful magnitude of the evil. M. l'Abbé Raynal, an author of deserved celebrity, and who possessed the most extensive means of information, asserts, that since the commencement of the slave-trade, between eight and nine millions of negroes have been imported into the colonies, and that notwithstanding so prodigious a number imported, not more than one million and a half are now to be found in all the European settlements!!! If this calculation be not exceedingly exaggerated, it shews a destruction of the human species to which the history of mankind affords no parallel; and let this question

question be put to every person who has the smallest feeling of humanity remaining in his breast, whether all the riches drawn from the new world can compensate for so horrid a massacre of his fellow-creatures; whether all the tobacco and coffee, all the rum and sugar, all the gold and silver ever brought from America and her islands, can balance so extensive a score of calamity? Every one, whose heart is not steeled against compassion, and callous to the sufferings of his fellow mortals, will have the answer ready; to hesitate would argue the total extinction of every sentiment of a rational being. Would it not have been a greater happiness to Europe never to have known the productions of the new continent, than to have thus added so black a volume to the long history of human misery?

This astonishing and unexampled destruction of the human species, is a proof more convincing than a volume of particular facts and insulated arguments could afford, of the hardships endured by those poor Africans, and at once confutes all that can be alleged concerning the lenity of their treatment;

ment; and, as it is an instance of depopulation unparalleled in the annals of the world, it is equally curious and interesting to inquire into its causes. That celebrated and philosophical historian, Dr. Robertson, expatiates at large on the causes of that depopulation which ensued among the natives of America, in consequence of the slavery to which they were reduced by the first Spanish adventurers. He represents the natives as men of weak bodies, and unfit for labor; and says, that on any emergency, when the Spaniards were willing to exert themselves, one Spaniard was able to perform more laborious work than five or six Indians. This he ascribes to their indolent mode of living, which exempted them from using vigorous exertions, to the insipidity of their food, and the small quantities they were accustomed to take; for, although the Spaniards are the most abstemious people in Europe, yet it was observed, that if one Spaniard could undergo as much labor, he also required as much victuals as five or six Indians, and the natives were astonished at the quantity of food devoured by the Spaniards,

as well as at the quantity of work they were able to perform. From these physical principles Dr. Robertson very rationally concludes, that men of so weak a frame, and so little accustomed to laborious exertions, were totally incapable of supporting the toilsome drudgery and excessive labor imposed upon them by their conquerors, and that consequently their feeble constitutions sunk under the burden. However, by the account of the Spaniards themselves, the Mexicans, although inhabitants of the torrid zone, were not so very deficient in strength, and much less in courage; but the disparity was too great between an army of men, though few in number, trained to European tactics, and armed with European weapons, and a multitudinous mass of unorganized and undisciplined troops, armed with no better weapons than pointed stakes or spears, with heads made only of a sharp-edged flint, or other stone, and in this seems to have consisted the superiority of the Spaniards over the Mexicans, as much as in their superior strength or courage. Notwithstanding this remark, Dr. Robertson's mode of

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reasoning,

reasoning, as far as it goes, is certainly just and appropriate; but he seems to have overlooked, or at least very slightly touched upon a cause of a moral nature, which perhaps operated as powerfully as any of the physical causes he enumerates, to the destruction of those unfortunate savages. This was that dejection of mind, that sinking of the spirits, which could not fail of being the natural and certain consequence of seeing themselves reduced from a state of comfortable ease and peaceful security to which they had ever been accustomed, to a state of slavery, toil, and drudgery under imperious and merciless task-masters. This dejection of mind, which must have overwhelmed their strength and spirits, may easily be conceived if we reflect on the circumstances of the case, and consider ourselves in their situation. If we contemplate in a parallel point of view the situation of the Spanish conquerors and that of the conquered and enslaved Indians, we shall see that no two situations in life could be more completely different. Their circumstances were diametrically opposite. The Spaniards

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who made the first conquests and settlements in America, were men long accustomed to a naval and military life. Their bodies were inured to every kind of hardship, their constitutions seasoned to every climate and every mode of living, and their minds were formed for daring enterprizes. These desperate adventurers undertook those conquests at their own expence and risk, and receiving nothing but commissions from the court of Spain. They embarked their whole property, and all their credit, in these hazardous undertakings, and consequently had no alternative between exorbitant wealth and honor on the one hand, and extreme poverty and distress on the other. Their minds were intent on great acquisitions and brilliant achievements. Their heads were filled with romantic projects; their imaginations were continually fixed on great and daring enterprizes, and the hasty accumulation of riches. Their courage was buoyed up with expectation, and whatever they undertook, they were determined to carry their point. It is no wonder that such men, in such circumstances, with such ideas, and
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animated with such prospects, should be capable of great exertions; but the condition of the poor, enslaved natives, formed the most striking, the most absolute contrast to that of the Spanish adventurers. Forcibly torn from all they valued or held dear, they saw themselves doomed to a life of toil and labor, without any cheering ray of hope, without any enlivening prospect. This could not fail to contribute as much as any of the physical causes which Dr. Robertson has mentioned, and perhaps more than all of them together, to debilitate those unhappy Indians, and hurry them in multitudes to the grave. The dejection of mind inseparable from such a situation could not fail to produce this effect. In all difficult, dangerous, or painful undertakings, the mind alone supports the man. This every one can ascertain who has investigated the nature of the human mind, and its influence over the bodily frame. Physicians well know that the affections and passions of the mind have a powerful effect on the body, and that the most vigorous constitution cannot long bear up under an extreme

and continual depression of spirits, from whatever cause it may proceed: thus causes purely of a moral nature often have a physical operation, and the problem, arising from the astonishing and unexampled depopulation which has taken place among the Africans in the colonies, admits of an easy solution. The human species in every part of the globe multiplies, and becomes more numerous, unless it be diminished by war, pestilence, famine, emigration, or other adventitious causes. The negroes are as prolific in their own country as any other people; and it is the interest of the masters to encourage their propagation in the colonies. Some moral cause then must be assigned for that unparalleled waste of human life, which cannot be attributed to any causes of a nature purely physical. It cannot be attributed either to their labor or their food. The negroes are a strong-bodied race of men, well formed for labor, and not many are imported but such as are of a sound body, and of an age proper for supporting fatigue; nor can we suppose them ever to have been much accustomed

customed to dainty fare. Neither can it be attributed to the climate. Their native country is situated in the torrid zone, under the same parallels of latitude as the West Indies, and the air of Guinea is hotter, more suffocating and insalubrious, than in almost any part of the American world. This is an evident proof, among many others, that this horrible destruction of the human species does not proceed from any physical causes. The real cause of a circumstance so shocking to humanity, is therefore a subject of inquiry worthy the attention of the philosopher and the philanthropist. I beg leave to take an affectionate farewell.

LETTER XX.

The real cause of that havock which slavery has made among the negroes—Their bitter anguish—Multiplied calamities—The slave-trade incompatible with Christianity—Confutation of the arguments in favor of it on the score of religion.

SINCE the amazing destruction of the human race displayed in the case of the unfortunate Africans, is not to be attributed to any physical causes with which we are acquainted, since their bodies are well formed for labor, and their former habits have inured them to no very dainty fare, we must look to the mind for the true cause of this shocking phenomenon, which has never been thus uniformly exhibited in any other race of men. Yes, my friend, the mind is the seat of happiness and of misery, and here we can discover the real cause of that havock

havock which slavery has made among the unfortunate Africans. The more we examine the matter, the greater reason we shall have to be confirmed in our opinion, and shall easily conceive the anguish of mind which they must suffer.

History commemorates the misfortunes of the great; romance delights to paint in glowing colors the fancied sufferings of imaginary heroes; and full-mouthed tragedy represents the calamities of illustrious personages, who have acted a conspicuous part in the theatre of the world; but if a circumstantial history of slavery could be written, every page, every paragraph would furnish a tragedy. Alas! of the history of slavery no more than some faint outlines can be given; but if all its horrid circumstances, all its shocking consequences could be related; if the imperious commands to which its unhappy victims have been obliged to submit, the unreasonable requisitions with which they have been forced to comply, the barbarous insults they have suffered, the corroding reflections, and heart-rending anguish that have embittered the lives of those

unfortunate wretches could be exhibited to public inspection, who could bear to contemplate such scenes? what eye could, without shedding a deluge of tears, peruse such annals of misery? and yet, in all this history of human woes, negro slavery would fill the blackest volume. If we trace the unfortunate negro from the moment he is forcibly dragged from his native country and paternal home, to the last moments of his miserable existence, if we could view his toilsome days, his sorrowful nights; if we could be acquainted with his melancholy reflections and the bitter anguish, that like a torrent must rush upon his soul at the remembrance of his lost liberty and former endearments, the most unfeeling would be moved with compassion, and interest itself would give way to humanity. In the negro slave we should see an unhappy being, on whose devoted head is accumulated the whole aggregate of wretchedness, the sum total of human misery; and is it possible that a rational being can contemplate such scenes of multiplied calamities, without sentiments of commiseration?

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It is, indeed, difficult to conceive by what subtilty of logic the slave-trade can be proved compatible with the Christian religion, which teaches unlimited charity, universal benevolence, and by a direct and positive injunction from the mouth of its Divine Author, commands us to do to others as we would that they should do to us.

By some it has been alleged, that the slave-trade affords an opportunity of converting the Africans to the Christian faith. But what sort of Christians can this mode of conversion make? What opinion can a poor enslaved African have of the Christian religion, who every day of his miserable life has in his own person so fatal an experience of the cruelty of its professors? If Europe sincerely desires the conversion of Africa, she certainly makes use of very ill-contrived means, and employs very ill-chosen apostles. Others have endeavoured to justify negro-slavery on another ground. The interior of Africa, they say, is governed by savage despots, in a continual state of hostility with one another; numbers of prisoners are taken in those contests among the negro princes,
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who would probably be massacred, if the Europeans did not afford them an opportunity of thus converting them into a profitable article of commerce. This may in part be true. We know but little of the inland parts of Africa, notwithstanding the enterprising efforts of Mr. Park and others, as already observed; but this description is not much unlike the picture her interior regions may be supposed to exhibit. However, it is somewhat questionable whether so unhappy a state of society, if it really exists in Africa, can justify the slave-trade carried on upon her coasts. Reasoning from the most evident probabilities, and we have nothing else to reason from, our acquaintance with those regions not being sufficient to supply us with facts and observations, we cannot but suppose that this opportunity of making merchandize of their prisoners, is one of the strongest incitements to those destructive and savage wars among the negro chiefs. If none would buy none could sell; and it is a principle of jurisprudence as well as of sound reason universally known and acknowledged, that no one has a right to buy
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of those who have no right to sell. It is likewise alleged in favor of the trade, that numbers of criminals are sold into slavery, who, if the Europeans did not purchase them, would suffer death as the punishment of their crimes. Such may be the case with some, but in such a state of society as exists in Negroland and Guinea, it is an easy thing to accuse and condemn an innocent person, the will of the chief is fully sufficient. In that country the accused can have no legal trial; his acquittal or condemnation rests in the sole disposal of despotic power, and what can be a greater temptation to the violent exercise of that power in criminal cases, than the prospect of making a profitable merchandize of the condemned? While the slave-trade is carried on by the Europeans, the arbitrary and unprincipled chiefs of Africa will never be at a loss to procure slaves, either among their own subjects by criminal condemnation, or among those of their neighbours by predatory hostilities.

In reasoning on this part of the subject, a circumstance of considerable importance ought not to pass unnoticed;—when crowds
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of negroes are conducted to the sea-coast for sale, can the European traders hold a court of judicature, in order to ascertain the guilt of each individual, and to discriminate between the guilty and the innocent? Have they the means of inquiring into these matters among people of whose laws, customs, and language they have so little knowledge, and at the distance, perhaps, of several hundred miles from the place where the crime is alleged to have been committed? Under these circumstances it is easy to perceive that the European trader, were he ever so conscientiously disposed to make justice his guide, could not ascertain the criminality or innocence of the person exposed to sale; neither could the poor slave, however innocent, have the means of making his innocence appear. For the present, my friend, adieu,

LETTER XXI.

Confutation of the arguments against the abolition of the slave-trade, on the score of national advantage.

IN my last I observed the principal arguments that can be adduced either in support of the system of negro slavery, or in favor of its abolition, when the subject is considered merely in a religious and moral point of view. If it be examined on the ground of expediency and national advantage, arguments of a weighty nature, and involving a variety of distinct and important considerations, may be brought forward on each side of the question. A most formidable phalanx of arguments are ranged in battalia against its abolition, arguments deduced from the nature of the climate, the dispositions of the negroes, and a variety of

other circumstances. The impossibility of cultivating the plantations without slaves has long been asserted; and if this impossibility really exists, there is but a faint prospect of ever seeing slavery abolished in the colonies. This was the argument principally insisted on by the first Spanish colonists, to justify, or at least to excuse their tyranny over the native Americans; and this is the most preponderating argument in favor of the system of negro slavery at this day. But is this impossibility real or imaginary? Is it not possible to cultivate the plantations of tobacco, sugar, coffee, cotton, &c. in the colonies without slaves, as well as the corn-fields and vineyards of Europe? In all the European countries we see magnificent edifices erected, highways cast up, navigable canals cut through extensive tracts of country, in a word, the most stupendous monuments of human industry produced without the labor of slaves. We see not only agriculture, but an endless variety of the most difficult manufactures, brought to a very great degree of perfection, without the labor of slaves; and why the colonies could not be cultivated
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without slaves, appears somewhat problematical. It is alleged that the sultry climate of those countries render it impossible that they should be cultivated by Europeans. Such an obstacle might indeed be insurmountable at the time of their first colonization, especially as the natives could not be prevailed on to work for wages; but there are now a sufficient number of negroes in those parts, who are accustomed both to the climate and the work, and also inured to labor. These men, if enfranchized, and animated by freedom and wages, would cultivate the soil; and living comfortably on the fruits of their industry, would propagate, and constantly keep up a race of robust laborers inured to the climate. Here, however, another obstacle occurs, and, as it arises from considerations of self-interest, the *primum mobile*, the main spring of human actions, it merits particular and attentive consideration.

If an abolition of the slave-trade, and the emancipation of the slaves, should take place, the negroes being no longer slaves but free-men, day-laborers, and command-

ing wages in proportion to the quantity of work they perform, the cultivation of the plantations would be much more expensive, a circumstance of which the natural and inevitable consequence would be a considerable advance in the price of their productions, which would bear hard upon the consumer in Europe, and ultimately diminish the consumption of colonial produce.

That the abolition of negro slavery would enhance the prices of the different articles of colonial produce, is a position of which we must acknowledge the truth, and consider the consequences in the fullest extent of their operation on individual and national interest. Europe would pay dearer for the commodities imported from her colonies; but she would at the same time see a new channel opened for the exportation of her own produce and manufactures. The negroes would live in greater affluence, and consequently would have a greater demand for European merchandize. One negro family would then consume a greater quantity of European commodities than perhaps five, or perhaps than ten do at present; for
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as money constantly circulates, there is no doubt but the negroes, like other men, would expend in proportion to their means of acquisition. This is an invariable effect of the natural disposition of mankind to enjoy the conveniences, and, perhaps we might add, the luxuries of life, as much as lies in their power; a disposition which is general in all nations, in all ages, and in all ranks of society, notwithstanding the seeming deviation of some eccentric or avaricious individuals. The emancipation, and the consequently increased affluence of the negroes, considered in this point of view, could not fail of being conducive to the extension of European commerce; for the industry of Europe will be excited, and her trade will flourish in proportion to the consumption of her colonies, if the assertion of M. l'Abbé Raynal be founded in truth, "that every settlement in the torrid zone requires the cultivation of a province in Europe, and that this is the real advantage which Europe derives from her colonies. This prospect of national advantage from the emancipation of the negroes, is highly deserving of the

attention of the European states, of Great Britain in particular, as being the principal commercial and manufacturing nation. In this I know your sentiments will coincide with mine.

I am, my dear friend,

Yours, &c.



LETTER XXII.

Continuation of the subject--The argument against the emancipation of slaves, for fear of their depredations, answered.-- A gradual liberation recommended--Those who have been the longest in slavery, should be the soonest set free.--The whole emancipation should be completed as soon as possible--The troubles of St. Domingo are not a substantial argument against negro emancipation.

IN resuming the argument, I must observe, that as to the objection, that the advanced prices of the articles of colonial produce would diminish their consumption, it requires but a small degree of reflection to perceive, that this could be no more than a momentary evil. The greatest probability is, that such a consequence would be scarcely perceptible. The colonial productions, esteemed at their first introduction as luxuries,

are now become necessaries of life to the inhabitants of Europe. Every one, in proportion to his means of gratification, uses as great a quantity of these commodities as he thinks requisite, and no more; and those who possess, in the very least degree, the means of indulgence, consume as great a quantity of them as they are able to procure. This is the case at present, and to all appearance ever will be so. The sugar, tobacco, &c. of the colonies, are now become as much the necessaries of life among all classes of people, as the butter and cheese of Europe.

If some retrenchment of those superfluities, should take place among a few individuals, it will probably be so small as to be scarcely perceptible in the general system of colonial traffic, and its transient effects will soon vanish. The causes which will augment the wealth and population of the colonies will produce a similar effect in Europe. In proportion as the wealth and population of Europe and her colonies increase, the reciprocal demand for each other's productions, will infallibly be increased; this is
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a natural and necessary consequence, so that the very measure, which, on a superficial view, might seem calculated to cause a decrease of the demand for colonial produce in Europe, will, upon mature consideration, appear to promise eventually a quite opposite effect.

All the commodities of European produce or manufacture, are exceedingly increased in value within the last half century; so is the land which produces them, and the labour employed in their production, but the consumption of those articles is not diminished. While wealth and population flourish, commerce will flourish likewise, and buyers will be found. These things have a reciprocal influence—they go hand in hand.

As another argument against the abolition it is alledged, that the tranquillity of the colonies would be exposed to imminent danger, from the emancipation of so great a number of slaves, who, being intoxicated with the sudden acquisition of freedom, might, perhaps, abandon themselves to a life of licentiousness and depredation, in-

stead of adopting the peaceful habits of industry. This might be the case with some. Such men there are in all countries—but cannot laws and regulations be made to restrain them? Must we cut off the hand of an honest man, to hinder him from becoming a thief? Or is it necessary to retain men in slavery, through a surmise that they may possibly make a bad use of liberty?—Far be such maxims from the liberal mind! Whenever the negroes shall be made free-men, let such of them as make a bad use of their freedom by any infringement of the law, be punished according to their demerit. Let a code of laws, calculated upon just and liberal principles, be made for the colonies, and let every disturber of the public peace, black or white, suffer condign punishment. There is no doubt but the negroes would, like other men, see and consult their true interest, by preferring a life of industry and peaceful security, to a life of continual uncertainty and danger, and regulate their conduct by the laws, as well as the populace of the different countries of Europe.

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However, as it is always imprudent to risk the introduction of one evil, by the removal of another, it might possibly be improper to emancipate all the negroes at once. In that case, a certain number might be set free every year, or every six months; and those who had been the longest in slavery, ought to be the soonest liberated. But if such a regulation should take place, commissioners, of strict consciousness and humanity, should be appointed to superintend the business, to take care that the slaves suffer no ill-treatment during the remaining part of their servitude, and that it be not unjustly prolonged beyond the period fixed by the laws. This period ought to be as short as it could be deemed consistent with prudence, that so the whole emancipation might be completed as soon as possible, without endangering the tranquillity of the colonies. It would, indeed, be much better, if the whole business could with safety and propriety be completed at once, and every vestige of slavery be effaced at one stroke.

The troubles of St. Domingo, and the

massacres there committed by the rebellious negroes, afford a plausible, but not a substantial argument against negro emancipation. The enormities committed in that once flourishing settlement, are not the necessary effects of that emancipation, but rather have originated in the circumstances of the times in which it took place. Such a state of things in both Hispaniola and Guadaloupe, is a natural consequence of that disorganizing system which, during a long time, convulsed the mother country as well as her colonies. Had the emancipation of the negroes been directed by the British government, or had that event taken place either under the former or present government of France, there is very little reason to think that the revolt of those islands would have taken place.

Under a peaceful and regular system, the enfranchised negroes would have become industrious cultivators of the soil, and useful members of society. Instead of this, the circumstances of the times were such as immediately obliged them to take up arms, and drew their attention from the dig and hoe,

to the musket and bayonet. This was the fatal cause which produced such pernicious effects. Indeed, the conversion of a numerous body of abject, oppressed, illiterate and savage slaves into a military band, inspiring them, at the same time, with the highest republican notions, and the most licentious ideas of equality, was too strange and too violent a metamorphosis, not to be attended with dangerous consequences.

This, however, I hope will never more be the case, and in this benevolent wish I know that you, my friend, sincerely join me, while, with esteem,

I am, &c.

LETTER XXIII.

The negroes, if emancipated, would be an useful class of subjects.—The colonies would make a rapid advancement in civilization and opulence.—It would benefit Europe.—The disturbances in the French settlements render the present movement not altogether proper for the immediate extension of freedom.—The objection that several colonists would lose considerable sums, by being deprived of the negroes they had purchased, might be removed by a subscription for that purpose at the expence of the state, or by a temporary tax—Cursory remarks on the first projectors of African slavery—The general aspect of the world, seems favorable to its abolition—The completion must be left to the wisdom of parliament—An address to the imperial senate on the subject—The British government has done more than any other in Europe towards the amelioration of the condition of the negroes—Affairs of magnitude require much serious consideration—Concluding reflections on the subject.

NO European state, which possesses colonies abroad, has a more useful class of subjects than the negroes would be, if they were emancipated in a regular and prudential

tial manner. By degrees they would grow opulent. By their industry as laborers, they would gradually acquire property in countries which afford such a variety of resources, and such an ample field for profitable exertions. Many of them would soon be in a capacity of renting or purchasing plantations. By these means they would rise to a state of opulence, and the posterity of the African slaves would receive a compensation for the evils inflicted on their progenitors.

These personal advantages, however, which relate chiefly to the negroes themselves, will be deemed by many as considerations of inferior importance, in comparison of the great and almost incalculable national advantages which would infallibly accrue to the European countries, from a well-regulated plan of negro emancipation. The negroes, as it has been already observed, making daily advances in opulence and civilization, far from confining themselves to the use of the bare necessities of life as at present, would, like all others in similar circumstances, soon acquire a taste for articles

cles of conveniency, and from that step pass on to a relish for those of luxury. This is the natural progress of civilized society.

The colonies thus constituted and thus circumstanced, would make a rapid advancement in civilization and opulence, and prove an inexhaustible source of wealth to Europe. They would open an ample field for commercial speculation and adventure. They would exceedingly augment the consumption of European produce and manufacture, and furnish new incitements to the invention and industry of the old world. With the increase of wealth and population in the colonies, the wealth and population of Europe would be increased in proportion, and her industry proportionably excited. This is a necessary and obvious consequence. The increased population and opulence of the colonies would cause an increasing demand for the merchandize of Europe; this would aggrandize her commerce, and increase her opulence, and Europe, in her turn, would have an increasing demand for the productions of her colonies. Thus, the advantages would be reciprocal; the circulation
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would be brisk, vigorous, uninterrupted, and extensively diffused throughout all the members of the body politic, though widely distant one from another. If the emancipation of the slaves of Hispaniola, Guadeloupe, and the other French islands, had taken place at a peaceful period, and under a regular and firmly-established system of government, instead of being effected just at the eve of a period of anarchy and disorganization, there is hardly any reason to doubt but the island of Hispaniola alone would, in a few years, have been of more value to France, than all the West India islands, taken collectively, are at present to their European possessors.

It must, however, be acknowledged that the disturbances which have taken place in the French settlements, have so far deranged the colonial system, as to render the present moment extremely critical, and perhaps not altogether proper for the extension of freedom to the unfortunate Africans; but of this, and every other measure relative to the subject, the wisdom of parliament is competent to determine. The plan will, undoubtedly,

undoubtedly, one time or other be carried into effect, and, whenever it is accomplished, will be a blessing to mankind, and an honor to human nature.

Another argument, founded on principles of strict justice, may be adduced against the emancipation of the slaves at present in the colonies; and to put a stop to the importation, without emancipating those already in slavery, would only be a partial act of humanity and justice, and make these unhappy wretches feel more sensibly the horrors of their situation. The objection here alluded to is this: the colonists, in the purchase and importation of slaves, have expended large sums of money, of which it would be an act of injustice to rob them, by depriving them of the slaves thus purchased. This argument we must allow to be just and reasonable. No person who has carried on any kind of traffic, not prohibited by existing laws, ought to be deprived of the capital disbursed, without an adequate compensation. This obstacle might, however, be easily removed. None of the nations concerned in this traffic, are

so poor as not to be able, without any great exertion, to make this compensation to their colonists. If the inhabitants of all the countries of Europe and America, now concerned in the slave-trade, would consent to deprive themselves of one meal of victuals per week, the savings produced by such an act of abstemiousness, would, in one year, reckoning the value on an average at one shilling per meal, raise a sum sufficient for the liberation of all the negroes in the colonies, if the number be no greater than one million and a half, according to M. L'Abbé Raynal's computation. And what man or woman, who is happy in the enjoyment of liberty, would grudge to contribute by so easy an act of self-denial, to the communication of this greatest of all blessings, to so numerous a portion of his fellow-creatures? Perish, indeed, the glutton who could refuse so small a sacrifice to humanity!

This measure, however, is not necessary, and is only adduced by way of illustration, to shew how easily good might be done, if men were unanimous in well doing. If, however,

however, the expences attending the emancipation of the negroes could be defrayed by a voluntary subscription in every European country, it would reflect honor upon human nature; but as this unanimity is not to be expected, the compensation to the colonist cannot be made but at the expence of the state, and this expence could not be a great national burden in any country of Europe, or of the united states of America. As to our own country, the people of the the united kingdom are rich, benevolent, and humane. Britons enjoy true rational liberty in its fullest perfection, and that liberty secured by the most excellent constitution ever devised by human wisdom. Favored by these incomparable blessings themselves, they could not murmur at a trifling expence, in order to extend them to their unhappy fellow creatures. The British senate is composed of enlightened men, eminent for political and legislative abilities, and for the most liberal and extensive humanity. Would it not be easy to make this compensation, and to defray other incidental expences by a tax for that purpose, which could

could neither be heavy, nor of long continuance? If no other difficulty occurred, this might easily be surmounted.

If the slave-trade be diametrically opposite to every sentiment of humanity—if it be repugnant to reason and religion—and, if the expediency and practicability of its abolition appear unquestionable, the contemplative and philosophic mind will naturally make this enquiry—Why is not this odious system long since abolished? or, rather, why was it ever adopted? By what fatal mistake did such good and enlightened men, as the ministers of Ferdinand, and his successor Charles V. and Father B. de las Casas adopt the measure; and through what infatuation was their plan continued by other nations of their own, and other religions? The solution of these problems must be sought in the circumstances of the infant colonies, so very different at that period to what they are at this time. It was necessary to cultivate the plantations, in order to render the colonies advantageous. The natives were unfit for labor; hands were necessary—at this time the case is different.

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ferent. There is now in the colonies a great number of negroes accustomed to labor, and these, if their condition was rendered comfortable by the blessing of freedom, would be sufficient for the cultivation of the soil, and there would, in all probability, never more be any scarcity of laborers. Perhaps the great Disposer of all things, who alone knows how to educe good from evil, might, in the mysterious designs of his providence, permit the establishment of negro slavery at that time, as a partial evil productive of general good, in contributing to cultivate and render useful to man extensive districts of the globe, before uncultivated.

Perhaps, also, the same reasons which concurred to introduce the system, might render its continuance for some time necessary. We ought not too hastily to condemn the actions of men with whose motives we are not fully acquainted, and of whose conduct we are not competent to judge. There is not any reason to doubt of the benevolent intentions of the first projectors of the system of negro slavery. To
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us, indeed, it does not appear easy to reconcile with the dictates of humanity or justice, the removal of so heavy a burden from America, by imposing it upon Africa; but they were anxiously desirous of emancipating the distressed Americans from the tyranny of their oppressors, and in the ardor of zeal, for the accomplishment of so benevolent a project, ventured upon the dangerous expedient of doing evil, that good might ensue; an experiment too hazardous to be made by short-sighted mortals, but which, in the management of human affairs, men are often obliged to make.

The first projectors of African slavery, appear to have been placed in this predicament, and consequently their errors have a claim to some excuse. There is not the least doubt but the parliament of Great Britain has long consisted of men of the most benevolent principles, as well as of the most distinguished senatorial abilities; men who both understood the interests of their country, and respected the rights of humanity, and who would long ago have abolished this diabolical traffic, if they had

seen the expediency of continuing it. The proper time for its abolition was not come. There must be a favorable concurrence of circumstances, to give efficacy to every measure, and circumstances never appeared so favorable to the abolition of the slave-trade, as at present. The British parliament has, in different sessions, already instituted many wise and humane regulations respecting the importation of slaves, and set a laudable example to other nations. Religious toleration and universal benevolence seem to predominate in Europe more than at any former period. The apprehension, that if Britain should abolish this traffic, other nations would convert the measure to her disadvantage, seems to have no longer any grounds. During the late and present war, Britain has exhibited herself the bulwark of Europe, and has preserved her excellent constitution inviolate amidst the convulsions of nations, and the wreck of governments. Her capital is immense, and her commerce extended beyond the power of any rival to injure. The general aspect of the world seems favorable to the abolition

abolition of slavery ; and we may venture to predict, that it will not be long before it be abolished by all the European nations, and we may rely on the enlightened humanity of the British parliament, that it will take a distinguished part in this great work, whenever it shall, in its wisdom, discover a coincidence of circumstances sufficiently favorable ; but of this, as well as of the whole detail of means to be used—parliamentary wisdom alone is competent to judge. Private persons may hazard their opinions, and amuse themselves with their own speculations ; but it would be an unpardonable presumption in any individual, however great his abilities, or however extensive his information might be, to pretend to direct the collective wisdom of the ancient senate of the nation. Could it, however, be found expedient, I should be happy to see the abolition of negro slavery added to the many glories of his present Majesty's reign ; that history might transmit to future ages, that the memorable reign of George III. extended the comforts of liberty to every class of subjects in the British dominions, and that his crown

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might descend with this additional blessing on it to posterity !

And you, who have so long pleaded the cause of suffering humanity, illustrious senators ! desist not from the glorious enterprise—redouble your efforts. Divine Providence will, in time, give efficacy to your wisdom and eloquence, by disposing things so as to make the work safe and easy. The task you have taken in hand, will in time be undoubtedly completed, and whether it be your lot to put the finishing hand to it or not, none can rob you of the honour of having undertaken and promoted the most glorious project that ever was conceived by man !

Projects of a complicated nature, and of momentous concern, can seldom be carried into execution but by diligent endeavours, and patient perseverance, amidst innumerable difficulties, and crowds of unforeseen disappointments and delays. Almost every great undertaking is accomplished by the combined and successive efforts of many minds. Alexander had the glory of conquering the Persian empire; but to his father

father, Philip, belongs the honor of having obtained the command of the confederate forces of Greece, and of having organized and disciplined the Macedonian phalanx, to which his son was indebted for his brilliant successes. And Rome, from a collection of about one thousand houses built of mud, and thatched with reeds, in time became the mistress and arbitress of the world, not by a single effort, but by unremitting perseverance. These great exertions began and ended with blood; tyrannic sway was their object; but you, if you accomplish your undertaking, will reach the summit of unblemished fame. Yours will be the glory of having begun and finished a work of everlasting excellence—the joy of many generations and millions, yet unborn, will call you blessed!

If, however, the time for its accomplishment be not yet come, you will at least have the honor of having laid the foundation of a structure of happiness which will undoubtedly one day be erected, and will never fall to decay.