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DOCUMENTS.

Remarks on the Sixth Report of the Directors of the African Institution, read at the Annual General Meeting, on the 25th of March, 1812.

[From the Philanthropist]

WE adopt the earliest opportunity of laying before our readers an account of this interesting publication.

In many respects have the friends of the Africans held up a most instructive example to those of their countrymen who may undertake the removal of evil: in none more conspicuously, than in the zeal and success with which they have worked upon the public mind, through that great instrument of human improvement and happiness, the press.

Their very first step was an appeal to the humanity of the British public, through a variety of publications, painting in the strongest colours the atrocious cruelties to which the slaves were condemned, in the tearing of them from their friends and country; during their passage at sea, and in the colonies after they arrived. We can recollect how these efforts were calumniated: what calamitous effects were predicted as sure to arise from them. They were treated (in the style usual against every exhortation to the removal of abuse) as *inflammatory, as pregnant with the seeds of insurrection, revolt, massacre, and extermination* in the colonies. Every West Indian merchant and planter, with hardly a single exception, denounced the murder of every white man, and the ruin of every white man's property, as a consequence that was altogether inevitable. It is in the recollection of the public what means were used to acquire supporters to the inhuman trade; what ministers, what royal Dukes were applauded, and proclaimed as opposing a popular and dangerous clamour, in the true spirit of philanthropy and patriotism. They were called friends to

property, friends to experience, to a system the perfection of which the wisdom of ages had confirmed. They were enemies to innovation, to untried experiments, to speculation, the rage of which was the hurrying on of the pretended friends of the Africans to produce ruin and devastation. Notwithstanding these accusations, which deter so many persons from the pursuit of abuses which they clearly see preying upon the prosperity of their country, the friends of the abolition held on a steady and manly course; never intermitted their labours, returned expeditious answers to all the pleas of their opponents, solicited the public attention by innumerable representations of the circumstances of the case, tried the legislature, when baffled were not disheartened, applied again to the public mind, assured, that if the public were sufficiently prepared, the legislature could not, on such a point as this, stand at absolute variance with the nation: and after years of exertion and defeat, at last made such progress in moulding the sentiments of the nation, that it would not have been long in the power of any ministry to withstand the work; when a ministry at last appeared, who prudently conferred upon themselves the honour and distinction of having abolished the Slave trade.

This is a practical and invaluable lesson to the friends of improvement in this country. It is in this way alone that almost any chance of improvement exists. All material improvements are sure of resistance, because every such improvement has by the nature of the case a host of powerful individuals interested in preventing it; interested in making an outcry against it; interested in enlisting every prejudice to oppose it; interested in employing every calumny that can render it suspected; interested in employing all the

arts of sophistry and misrepresentation, to lull the people into contentment under the existence of threatened abuse. All abuses in government which are not the effects of mere ignorance, consists in this, viz. the sacrifice of the interests of the many to the interests of the few; that is, the interests of the weak to the interests of the strong. Hardly any improvement, therefore, can take place, but at the expense, real or imaginary, of the strong. The strong, therefore, must be overcome before the abuse can be rectified. Now, happily, in this country of ours, where we have a press, though far too deeply enslaved, yet partially free, this may be done through the means so successfully employed by the Abolitionists of the Slave trade; it may be done by creating a clear perception in the body of the nation of the reality and magnitude of the abuse, and then the remedy takes place, as it were of its own accord.

The friends of the abolition have not turned their backs upon the ladder by which they have risen. Though they now possess sufficient influence to command the attention of the most powerful, they have not resigned the care of maintaining on their side the salutary influence of the public mind. They make still a good use of the press; they yearly address to the public a distinct Report of their proceedings, and present all the information which, bearing upon the great points of the plan, they have been able to collect. It is the sixth of these annual productions to which we have now the pleasure of directing the attention of our readers.

The directors begin by lamenting the additional proofs which they have received of the extent to which, notwithstanding the laws, the traffic in slaves is still carried on upon the coast of Africa. "The result of the intelligence which they have received is, that during the year 1810, no less than from 70,000 to 80,000 Africans were transported as slaves from the western coast of Africa to the opposite shores of the Atlantic."

It is really remarkable, and a thing which in various of its bearings, does deserve to make an impression upon the minds of the people of this country, that this prodigious trade in human blood, this enormous contravention of a favourite object of the British people, is almost entirely perpetrated by means of the Portuguese; that is, a people in defence of whom the

British people are making unheard of exertions, and sustaining unheard of burthens; in defence of whom they are shedding their blood, and expending their treasure in oceans. There is something exquisitely curious in this state of international relation. On our part, we are doing every thing for that people; preserving to them (if that be any advantage) the very name of a people; maintaining their very court by our pensions, and their army by our pay; and yet we cannot obtain from them even the small boon of co-operating with us in the abolition of the Slave trade. We do obtain from them, however, what to a vulgar eye would seem as difficult to obtain. We obtain the absolute command of their army, and the absolute sovereignty of their country. Lord Wellington is far more the entire master in Portugal, than Bonaparte is in France. But it seems the Slave trade is a favourite point. The Portuguese are a superstitious people; possibly they have a superstitious attachment to the selling of Africans, as they have to the burning of Protestants and Jews. We must, of course, suppose it to be a thing absolutely unattainable, to prevail upon them to co-operate with us, or at any rate not to counteract us, in destroying the Slave trade: otherwise, so sincere a friend to the abolition as Mr. Perceval, would not have failed, and such friends to the law as Lord Liverpool and Lord Castlereagh, will not fail to accomplish that object, an object dear to humanity, but an object (one would think) of little moment to the Portuguese.

What the directors say upon this subject is not amiss.

"Bissao remaining in the possession of Portugal, an opportunity was thus afforded for continuing the Slave Trade from that settlement; and the opportunity has not been neglected. In proportion as the vigilance of our cruizers rendered it hazardous to trade for slaves to other parts of the windward coast, the Slave Trade from Bissao was increased. It was further swelled by a sort of coasting trade, carried on in canoes, from a considerable distance both to the north and south of this privileged spot. The effect of the distinction which it enjoyed became particularly visible in its own more immediate vicinity; and an intelligent officer of the navy, who lately visited the Rio Grande, at the mouth of which the island of Bissao is situated, describes the devastation which had taken

place along the banks of that river as almost exceeding belief. He distinctly states, that the country on both its banks was quite unpeopled by the Slave Trade.

“The directors are deeply concerned that some arrangement has not been made, by the cession of Bissao or otherwise, to put a stop to this evil. It is an evil, indeed, which was anticipated in its full extent by the directors, as their minutes from the commencement of their labours will testify; and they have not ceased, during the time which has intervened, to make the most urgent representations to his Majesty’s government on the subject. The recent intelligence which has been received has, unhappily, confirmed all their previous apprehensions; although they trust it may have the effect of giving new weight to their representations. It is due to his majesty’s government, at the same time, to add, that they have uniformly expressed a desire to promote the wishes of the directors on this important point, although hitherto little progress appears to have been made towards their accomplishment.”

It seems the directors got “the expression of a desire” from the ministry. To be sure, this was a great deal: the expression of a desire! and the directors are proportionably grateful for it. “It is due to his majesty’s government,” they solemnly remark, to add, that they uniformly got from them this expression of a desire: although, they subjoin, with melancholy, that hitherto little (that is *no*) progress has been made in this part of the business.

It is lamentable to what an extent ambiguity, uncertainty, and doubt, characterize the first penmanship of English laws. The penning of them is almost always the work of lawyers, whose business much more consists in creating darkness than light: confusion than distinctness; and whose language is in general the least precise and accurate of all men that read and write. The characteristic debility of a lawyer to express himself distinctly and precisely, is then the cause of this so often mentioned and so often lamented characteristic of English legislation, which the directors of the African Institution here with lamentation denounce, as corrupting the treaty subsisting between this country and Portugal. By the tenth article of that treaty, the Portuguese were restricted in their Slave Trade to places belonging to the crown of Portugal.

“In their former Report, the directors

alluded to certain ambiguities in the Treaty of Amity with Portugal. Those ambiguities have naturally perplexed the naval officers; whose business it has been to carry into effect the provisions of the treaty. The *intention* of the article in question has been understood to be (and as the directors believe, correctly), to limit the Portuguese Slave Trade to places actually in the possession of Portugal. The article is so expressed, however, as to have suggested doubts whether it did not give the Portuguese a right of trading for slaves on some parts of the Gold Coast, and at Whydaw. But, in truth, they have no more title to trade for slaves at either of these places, on any ground of occupancy, than they have to carry on such a trade at Goree or Sierra Leone. At Whydaw they have never had any possession beyond that of a factory, which they were allowed by the king of the country to form there.

They have never been understood even to *claim* any rights of sovereignty in that country. On the Gold Coast they possessed indeed at one time considerable power, and the fortresses of St. George del Mina and Axim were erected by them. But the first of these forts was taken by the Dutch in 1637; and in 1642 the Portuguese were driven entirely from that part of the coast, where they have never regained the smallest footing. In short, with the exception of Bissao, and of the islands of Princes, St. Thomas, and Anabona, the Portuguese dominion on the west coast of Africa extends only along the coasts of Angola and Benguella; that is to say, from the latitude of about 8° to 18° south.

“Under these circumstances, to claim a right of sovereignty over any parts of the Gold Coast and Whydaw would appear to be in the highest degree extravagant.

“The scruples, however, produced in the minds of naval officers, by the manner in which the article is framed, led, in one short cruise, to the liberation of no less than thirty Portuguese ships found trading for Slaves on the Gold Coast, and which the directors conceive to have been so trading in violation of the treaty.”

The real state of the great mass of the trade is represented as being, in reality, a British and American trade, that is, a trade carried on with British and American capital, under the disguise of a Portuguese flag.

The next fact, of which the directors

take notice, is mentioned in a double point of view ; first, in regard to the fact; the unjust enslaving of a free man ; and next, in regard to the hands that were accessory in perpetrating the crime, viz. the *judge's hands.*

“ The members of the Institution will probably recollect a case of great oppression, detailed in the Appendix to their last Report, which had occurred in the island of St. Vincent's ; that of John Wise, who, though entitled to his freedom, was, on his return to the island, most unjustly reduced to slavery. The directors were indebted for their knowledge of the circumstances of this case to Hugh Perry Keane Esq. of St. Vincent's, who, with a generous ardour in the cause of justice and humanity, undertook to advocate the cause of this friendless African. His efforts, however, which were perseveringly and gratuitously exerted in the courts of the island, to obtain legal address, proved unavailing. The sentence of the judge confirmed the act of oppression by which he had been deprived of his freedom. While the directors were endeavouring to obtain a reversal of this sentence, an object in which they had the prospect of succeeding, they received intelligence which superseded the necessity of any further exertion : Wise had effected his escape from St. Vincent's, and placed himself in a state of security.”

Among lawyers, and lawyers' dupes, whether in Parliament or out of it, it is a maxim which they endeavour to force upon people with outcry, that no blame is ever to be imputed to a judge. All those who use this outcry, declare to the world their belief, that the conduct of judges is of a nature that will not bear to be looked into ; that if men knew how bad it is, they would not permit it to remain unreformed. Were they of a contrary opinion ; did they know it so excellent, that the more accurately it were examined, the more sure it would be of applause and admiration, they would never cry out in apprehension of an examination. For what is the result of accusation, if it be false ? Only to produce examination ; only to produce a defence founded upon the proof of actual facts. Those who cry out, therefore, to bring down punishment upon the heads of all those who impute blame to judges, are the accusers of the judges. Whenever any man is agitated with the fear of blame, it is time to distrust him. That which seeks to cover itself with mystery, is the legiti-

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mate object of suspicion. When the judges, therefore, join in the cry, (which they are by far too ready to do,) they are their own accusers ; they tell the world that there is something behind the screen, that screen which they are so afraid of seeing pulled down, something which it very much imports them should not be known. As far as their conduct is good, so far would exposure prove to their honour ; it is only misconduct that needs a hiding place. No doctrine, therefore, can be more false, than that the liberty of the press requires any peculiar restraint in remarking upon the administration of justice. On the other hand, in proportion as the administration of justice is important to society, in proportion it is important, that the press should exercise over it a vigilant and efficient controul. There is a peculiar necessity for upholding this doctrine at the present moment ; and, therefore, we rejoice at the manliness of the directors of the African Institution, for speaking out, without mincing, on the misconduct of the judge of St. Vincent, “ who confirmed an act of oppression by his sentence.”

The directors also expatiate upon the state of that administration of justice which was exhibited in the case of Huggins and Hodge. The facts of these two cases we have already stated to our readers ; and, therefore, we shall not dwell upon them here. But a few lines of what is remarked, by the directors, we cannot forbear to insert.

“ The facts of Mr. Huggin's case, which were detailed in the Appendix to the last Report, require no comment. Mr. Huggins had most flagrantly violated not only every law of humanity, but the clear and express enactment of his own legislature, in the measure of punishment he had inflicted on his slaves. He had done this openly, in the public market-place of the chief town of the island of Nevis, and in the presence of several magistrates, without any attempt being made to prevent the outrage. When brought to trial, through the public-spirited conduct of a few individuals, he was acquitted by the jury, in direct opposition, as it appears, to the evidence, and to the charge of the judge. Not satisfied with this acquittal, he prosecuted in his turn, and prosecuted to conviction, the printer of the St. Kitt's newspaper, who had merely inserted, at the desire of the Assembly of Nevis, a resolu-

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tion of that body, expressive of their abhorrence of Mr. Huggin's conduct; and this poor man is still suffering under the sentence which was pronounced upon him by the court of St. Kitt's."

We quote this for the sake of the indignation so justly and properly expressed against the conviction and punishment of the printer of the St. Kitt's newspaper, for a most meritorious act; for employing his press in exposing the enormities of this oppressor. Here, however, there is no reason whatsoever to condemn the judge. What in this case deserves condemnation, and the deepest that can be pronounced, is the *law*, the law of libel, which most undeniably subjects to punishment this meritorious act of the printer; and, indeed, the most important part of all the meritorious acts of which the press can be the instrument. It has been declared, from the highest authority, that *no writing which imputes imperfection to any institution of government, that no writing which imputes blame to any functionary of government, or which has a tendency to hurt his feelings, is any thing else than a libel*, or exempt from any punishment short of life and limb, which the judge chooses to inflict. To a considerable extent, the law is not executed, and that is the freedom we enjoy—freedom, arising from the violation of the law. To a great extent, however, it also is executed, and the terror of its execution operates to a still greater extent. Hence there is a very large and important portion of the field of utility which is forbidden ground to the press. On this ground, it is free to the panegyric and flattering writers, to shed all their praises without the possibility of an answer; to feed the prejudices of the interested and the ill-educated, in fact, to spread and confirm delusion; while it is not safe for any writer to point out their deceit, to tell the real truth, to show that things are black when such deluders pronounce them white; that they want improvement, when the deceivers pronounce them perfect. To the whole of this extent, to the whole of the extent in which it is profitable to speak on the one side, but not to speak on the other, the use of the press, it is evident, is an evil; better be deprived of it. Deception, and the consequent production of evil, is its natural consequence. If the African Institution, who thus finds the law of libel pernicious, would use their influence with the legislature, to procure for us a good law of the press, (of the vague, useless,

and pedantic word *libel* ought to be discarded,) they would perform a still more important office of humanity, than even by the abolition of the Slave trade, greatly as we value that memorable achievement.

After adverting to these instances and proofs of an unwholesome state of things in the West Indies; the Report goes on;

"The directors believe, that the necessity of a *reform* in the administration of our West India colonies is strongly felt, not only by the public, but by many persons connected with those islands, who can no longer shut their eyes to the consequences of the system, which has been established there. The directors have adverted to this subject, not for the purpose of entering at present into any explanation of their views upon it, but merely that the members of the Institution may understand that it is one which occupies much of their attention."

We are glad, that the directors have not been afraid, thus distinctly and audibly to pronounce the word *reform*. They may get into bad odour in certain quarters for this; but there is only the more necessity for it on this account. It seems very remarkable, that so imperfect a being as man, whose institutions so necessarily partake of his own infirmities, and have their only chance of attaining the highest practicable degree of excellence, by vigilant attention to improve by—the dictates of experience, and to apply its suggestions as they arise, should any where, and in any circumstances, set himself up against improvement. Yet so it is; a great and leading portion of the people of England declare themselves enemies of all improvement, and of all those who recommend it. As all abuses are for the profit of somebody, there is a portion of the people who have an unhappy interest in preaching against improvement; and in this country they form a very large and powerful confederacy. However, the grand evil is, that they are able, by their arts and industry, to get so many others to believe them. We are exceedingly gratified to hear, that a plan of reform for the administration of the West Indies "occupies much of the attention of the directors." We earnestly hope, that they will not permit time to waste away, before bringing it forward, and urging and pressing it with all their abilities and influence. Let them not be reformers in word only, if it be true, as they themselves declare, that the necessity of a reform in the ad-

ministration of our West India colonies is strongly felt, not only by the public, but by many persons connected with those islands, who can no longer shut their eyes to the consequences of the system which has been established there," surely no time is to be lost. We hope the directors will not do what they say the ministry contented themselves with doing, only "express a desire." The meanest and most powerless of us all can express a desire. But when those who have the power content themselves with the expression of a desire, it is either a proof that the desire is not there at all, or that it is there in a very feeble state.

The directors have undoubtedly the power of bringing forward a plan: a plan brought forward by them would have great authority; and, supported by all their influence, would stand a good chance of bearing down opposition. No doubt their plan at first would not be perfect; but it would be a great improvement upon the existing state of things; and it would lie open to amendment; as experience from time to time suggested better methods of adapting the powers of government to the promotion of the welfare of the population, they might be, and ought to be adopted. They are perfectly right in their conclusion, that the seat of the disease is at the heart, viz. in the administration of the islands. To apply cauteries to the extremities, may in that case allay the pangs of the patient, but will never eradicate the disease.

The directors with great justice remark, (p. 16: that "it is one of the inconveniences almost necessarily incident to legislation, when applied to new and anomalous cases, that it can hardly anticipate all the results which may be produced, or all the evasions which may be practised." This, at once, shows the necessity, in all legislation, of a vigilant attention to progressive improvement. Legislators are obliged to legislate upon the knowledge which they possess at the moment. But it is hardly possible for this knowledge at first to be perfect; to comprehend every thing which it would be expedient that the law should adjust; still less is it possible for any legislators to foresee the changes which may take place in the nature and state of affairs, requiring correspondent changes in the law. Law, therefore, should always be open to change. There should be a general feeling, that improvement is always wanted, and a disposition

always to welcome it. Unhappily, the very opposite is the state of mind in this country; or at any rate it is a state of mind directly opposite, that a great many leading personages labour to engender; viz. a feeling that improvement is never necessary, a disposition to dread and resist it.

There is one story given us in the Report, which is so much to the credit of all parties concerned, and which, we think, will be so acceptable to our readers, that we cannot forbear quoting it.

"About fourteen years ago, Daniel Hill, Esq. of Antigua, purchased from a slave ship a negro slave of the name of Mohammed. Discovering him to have been above the common class in his own country, and to have acquired a considerable share of Arabic literature, he was led to treat him with particular indulgence. Mohammed manifested a strong attachment to the Mohammedan religion, and his master paid the utmost attention to the religious scruples of his slave. At length Mr. Hill resolved to grant him his liberty, and to procure for him the means of returning to his own country. Mohammed arrived at Liverpool in the month of June last, recommended to the care of Mr. Shand of that place, under whose roof he remained during a stay of two or three months in England. An application having been made on behalf of this stranger to the directors, they were induced to be at the expense of conveying him to Goree, which was the nearest point to the residence of his family; and they furnished him with letters to Major Christholm, the governor of that place, and a member of this Institution, on whose good offices in Mohammed's favour they confidently rely."

The following important intelligence respecting the promise yielded by the African continent of certain important articles of produce.

"Mr. Dawes, on his return to England, presented to the Board a variety of specimens of African produce and manufacture, of which a more detailed account will hereafter be given. One or two remarks on them will suffice for the present. The Indigo manufactured at Sierra Leone, by one of the black settlers, is found to be quite as good in its quality as that which was first brought from the East Indies when its culture there comm. need. When carefully compared with some East India Indigo, which was lately sold at

4s. 8d. per pound, it proves to be of about half the value. This inferiority, however, arises not from any defect in the plant producing the dye, but from the want of skill in its manufacture. The directors hope to furnish the colony with some useful information on this point.

"A further experiment has been made on the substitute for hemp produced from the leaves of the palm tree, and its superior strength as compared with the Russian hemp, and as stated in a former Report, has been fully ascertained. It seems well adapted for various uses, and particularly for bolting cloths, and objects of the same description; and the directors apprehend that it would be possible to obtain it in considerable quantities.

"A specimen of the hemp produced from the Sunn of Bengal, proves that this useful plant may be cultivated with advantage on the African continent; and the vicinity of that continent seems to obviate one great objection to its use, arising from the enormous expense of freight which attends the bringing of it from India.

"The Bourbon and Nankeen cotton seeds are also stated to have come up."

It seems that the coffee shrub grows wild in vast profusion in various parts of the African coast. And coffee has been lately brought from Sierra Leone which promises to rival Mocha Coffee itself.

(To be Continued.)

The following extracts are taken from the proceedings of the last General Synod of Ulster, held in Cookstown, July 4th, in relation to Robert Adams, the minister of Clare, who, it may be recollected, was opposed by his congregation, for signing the Protestant Petition in favour of Catholic Emancipation.

A Memorial was presented to the Synod signed by fifty-eight members of the congregation of Clare, complaining of the conduct of certain disorderly persons in that congregation, in shutting the doors of their meeting-house against the Rev. Mr. Adams, their minister, thereby preventing them from enjoying the benefit of public worship, for more than three months, and

praying the interposition of the Synod, to have the doors of their meeting-house opened, for the purpose of public worship as usual.

A memorial was also presented from a part of the congregation, styling themselves a Synodical majority of the congregation of Clare, expressing their dissatisfaction at the decision of the Presbytery of Armagh, on certain charges brought against Mr. Adams, and praying for a re-hearing of said charges before the Synod.

The minutes of the Presbytery of Armagh, respecting the whole of this business, were read, when the Synod adjourned.

At the next meeting, the business respecting the congregation of Clare being resumed, the commissioners from the majority being asked, were they prepared to deliver the keys of their meeting-house to this Synod? answered, they were not. Whereupon it was resolved, that they could not be received as commissioners, and that their memorial be dismissed.

Resolved unanimously, That the proceedings of the Presbytery of Armagh in this affair be highly approved of.

Ordered, That a committee, consisting of the following members, viz. Messrs. Moore, Patterson, and Morell, with Samuel Allen, and Hugh White, Esqrs., Elders, be appointed to meet in Armagh, on Friday the 17th inst., at 11 o'clock, A.M., then, and there, to issue every matter in dispute between Mr. Adams and the congregation of Clare. Three to be a quorum, of which two at least are to be ministers.

Mr. Malcolm is ordered to exchange pulpits with Mr. Adams, on Sunday se'night, and read this minute to the congregation. The Presbytery of Armagh are enjoined to attend the meeting of the committee, and give them such information as they may require.

We would be much obliged to any correspondent, who would furnish us with the authentic account of the further proceedings of the committee in this affair.

SIGNATURES OBTAINED TO THE PETITION OF PROTESTANTS IN FAVOUR OF CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION.

*At Killileagh.**

Andrew Marshal, Curate Arch. Hamilton Rowan Joseph Young

* This list was mislaid for a time. It is not yet too late to enrol the signatures among the friends of liberality and religious freedom.