AN ADDRESS
TO THE
PEOPLE OF GREAT BRITAIN,
ON THE UTILITY OF REFRAINING FROM
THE USE OF
West India Sugar and Rum.

Why did all-creating Nature
Make the Plant for which we toil?
Sighs must fan it, Tears must water;
Sweat of ours must dree the Soil.
Think ye Masters, iron-hearted,
Lolling at your jovial Boards,
Think how many Backs have smarted
For the Sweets your Cane affords!
Cowper's Negro's Complaint.


Printed and Sold by T. Reed, Bookseller, High-Sweet,
Sunderland, 1791.
Price 1/-. or fourteen for a shilling.

N. B. Persons wanting a larger Number to give away
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AN ADDRESS, &c.

Notwithstanding the late determination of the House of Commons on the Slave-Trade, we may hope that the discussion it has received will not be useless; and that the public attention has not been excited in vain, to a system of cruelty which it is painful even to recite. It may be hoped that, claiming for ourselves the most perfect freedom, we shall no longer impose upon others a slavery the most oppressive; and that, enjoying a degree of felicity unequalled in any age or country, we shall cease to range the world to increase the misery of mankind.

The lust of power, and the pride of conquest, have doubtless produced instances far too numerous, of man enslaved by man. But we, in an enlightened age, have greatly surpassed, in brutality and injustice, the most ignorant and barbarous ages; and while we are pretending to the finest feelings of humanity, are exercising unprecedented cruelty. We have planted slavery in the rank soil of fordid avarice; and the produce has been misery in the extreme. We have ascertained, by a course of experiments in cruelty, the least portion of nourishment requisite to enable man to linger a few years in misery; the greatest quantity of labour, which in such a situation, the extreme of punishment can extort; and the utmost degree of pain, labour, and hunger united; the human frame can endure, without terminating its existence.

In vain have such scenes been developed. Those who are not yet fully acquainted with the nature and cruelty of this traffic, may obtain ample information
derived from the horrid traffic, has created an influence that secures its continuance; unless the people at large shall sap its foundation, by refusing to receive the produce of robbery and murder. The Legislature having refused to interpose, the people are now necessarily called on, either to reprobate or approve the measure; for West Indian Slavery must depend upon their support for its existence, and it is in the power of every individual to increase, or to diminish its extent. The laws of our country may indeed prohibit us the sugar-cane, unless we will receive it through the medium of slavery. They may hold it to our lips, steeped in the blood of our fellow-creatures; but they cannot compel us to accept the loathsome potion. With us it rests, either to receive it and be partners in the crime, or to exonerate ourselves from guilt, by spurning from us the proffered temptation. For let us not think, that the crime rests alone with those that conduct the traffic, or the Legislature by whom it is protected; if we purchase the commodity we participate in the crime. The slave-dealer, the slave-holder, and the slave-driver, are virtually the agents of the conserver, and may be considered as employed and hired by him to procure the commodity. For by holding out the temptation, he is the original cause, the first mover in the horrid process; and every distinction is done away by the moral maxim, That whatever we do by another, we do ourselves.

As neither the slave-dealer, nor the planter, can have any moral right to the person of him they sell their slave, to his labour, or to the produce of it; to they can convey no right in that produce to us: and whatever number of hands it may pass through, if the criminal circumstances appertaining to it be known to them at the time of the transfer, they can only have a criminal poffeion: and the money paid, either for the slave, or for the produce of his

mation by perusing some of the many publications on that subject, particularly the Authentic Evidence on the Slave Trade delivered before a Select Committee of the House of Commons, an Abstract of which has been lately published.
labour, is paid to obtain that criminal possession; and can confer no moral right whatever. So, if the death of the person called a slave, be occasioned by the criminal possession, the criminal possessor is guilty of murder; and we, who have knowingly done any act which might occasion his being in that situation, are accessories to the murder before the fact; as by receiving the produce of his labour, we are accessories to the robbery, after the fact.

If we, as individuals concerned in the Slave Trade (either by procuring the Slaves—compelling them to labour—or receiving the produce) imagine that our share in the transaction is so minute that it cannot perceptibly increase the injury; let us recollect that, the numbers partaking of a crime may diminish the shame, they cannot diminish its turpitude. Can we suppose that an injury of enormous magnitude can take place, and the criminality be destroyed merely by the criminals becoming so numerous as to render their respective shares indistinguishable? Were an hundred assassins to plunge their daggers into their victim, though each might plead that without his assistance the crime would have been completed, and that his poniard neither occasioned nor accelerated the murder, yet every one of them would be guilty of the entire crime. For into how many parts ever a criminal action may be divided, the crime itself rests entire and compleat on every perpetrator.

But in this case we are by no means warranted to consider our individual share in a trivial point of view. The consumption of sugar in this country is so immense, that the quantity commonly used by individuals will have an important effect. A family that uses 5lb. of sugar per week, with the proportion of rum, will, by abstinence from the consumption 21 months, prevent the slavery or murder of one fellow-creature; eight such families in 19 1-half years, prevent the slavery or murder of 100, and 38,000 would totally prevent the Slave Trade, to supply our islands. Nay, so necessarily connected are our consumption of the commodity, and the misery resulting from it, that in every pound of sugar used, (the produce of slaves imported from Africa) we may be considered as consuming two ounces of human flesh, besides an alarming number
number of seamen destroyed by the slave-trade, and the inconceivable anguish and misery that must result from parents being torn from their families, and children from their parents, villages burnt, and continual suspicion, terror and dismay, spread thro' an extensive country. A French writer observes, "That he cannot look on a piece of sugar without conceiving it stained with spots of human blood." And Dr Franklin very properly adds, "that had he taken in all the consequences, he might have seen the sugar not merely spotted but dyed scarlet in grain."

Dreadful consideration, that our increasing happiness and prosperity has spread desolation and misery over a country as large as all Europe! For it is an indisputable fact, that it is British luxury, the African Slave Trade depends on for support; they have increased, and they would fall together.—Our consumption of sugar is now so immense, that it nearly equals the consumption of all Europe besides; and Jamaica now supplies more sugar than all our West India Islands did at any period prior to 1755.

But amazingly extensive as is the increase of the culture, so far is it from keeping pace with our luxury, that (before the disturbances in the French Islands, within these two or three years) sugars have ever sold in the British market 20 or 30, sometimes 50 per cent. dearer than in any other part of the world, and it is to form new plantations for the supply of this our increasing luxury, that the wretched Africans are torn from their native land.

Let us then imagine our immense consumption wholly, or in great part to cease, and our sugars to be thrown on the foreign markets; would additional slaves he wanted to supply an overflowing market at a falling price? The African Slave Trade, by whomsoever conducted, to supply sugar colonies, by whatever nation possessed, must totally cease. Horror and dismay would give place to peace and civilization, through a coast of above three thousand miles extent, and above a thousand miles inland; for so extensive are our depredations, and so extensive are the benefits which it is in our power to confer. Nor would they cease, even here. The West India islands, finding their demand
demand for sugar, must appropriate less ground to the sugar cane, and leave more for provisions; the slaves would be less worked, better fed, and in a few years consist entirely of native creoles. Or if the planters appropriate the land to the other productions of the islands, the same beneficial effects must ensue: for Mr. Cooke tells us, "the cultivation of cotton, pimento, and coffee, is easier than sugar: the slaves look better, and increase faster;" and instead of requiring additional slaves, they would be able to increase their plantations with those already in the Islands. For Governor Parry tells us, "one acre of sugar requires as much labour as three of cotton." Thus our refraining from the consumption of the sugar cane, even for a few years, would destroy the slave trade to the West India Islands; bring fresh land into culture, and place the slaves in those Islands in such a situation that they must rapidly increase.

The diminution of the consumption of West India produce, would also have a powerful effect by sinking the price of the commodity; and thereby take away the temptation to import additional slaves. The effect a small variation in the supply or demand has on the price, we have recently experienced. The small interruption of the supply on the continent, by the disturbances in the French sugar islands, has suddenly raised some of the markets, which were 20 or 30 per cent. lower than the British, much above it; and thereby occasioned an exportation from this country to supply the deficiency; and our exportation, though only amounting to a 10th of our importation, has raised our sugar 50 per cent. And as a fall in the price would obstruct the slave trade, and ameliorate the condition of the slaves; so this rise will produce effects the most beneficial. The planter, tempted by the high price to get sugar and rum to market while that high price continues, will deprive his slaves of their provision grounds, to plant them with cane; and by the energy of the whip, they will be forced to the most extreme exertions. The murder, or, in the technical language of the West Indies, the loss of his slaves, will be to him but a secondary consideration. The large crop and the high price will amply compensate him; and the
question now is, not merely whether we shall hold out to
him an inducement to purchase additional slaves; but
whether we shall tempt him to murder those he already
has. We can hardly doubt but that West Indian packets
have already borne the murderous dispatches, expressed
in language too dreadfully explicit, and to the following
“Neither is it possible to forward as large a cargo as
possible. A fortunate chance now offers itself for ex-
tricating my estate from the difficulties in which it is
involved. We must avail ourselves of it; another may
ever occur. Consequences, tho' disagreeable, must at
the present moment be overlooked. The slave market
is still open for a supply. New-fangled humanity
is no more.” The day hardly dawns when the whip
refounds through those regions of horror; nor ceases, till
darkness cloths the scene, which day after day is renewed.
The miserable victims, destitute of every source of comfort
to body or to mind, and sinking under the three endemic
diseases of our islands, hunger, torture, and extreme la-
bour; and urged to exertions they are unable to sustain,
at length expire beneath the lash, which in vain en-
devours to rouze them to a renewal of their labour.

After the important considerations adduced, it might
be reckoned a degradation of the subject to mention the
national dignity; or even that might induce us to coun-
teract a powerful body of men, who are equally trampling
under foot, the dictates of humanity, and the interest of
the nation.

Men, who, by enjoying a monopoly of the British mar-
ket, have in 50 years received for sugar alone, above
70 millions more than it would have cost at any other
market. And from Mr Botham’s evidence it appears,
that in Batavia, where labour is as high as in England,
sugar, equal to the best West India, is sold at three-halfs-
pence per pound. These are the men, who have the
audacity to oppose a plan, for supplying us with sugars,
without violating justice; and are purchasing shares in a
company, in order to defeat its purpose. These are the
men who declare, “That the British legislature cannot
abolish the slave trade; for that if we refuse to furnish
them
them with slaves, they will obtain a supply through other channels." This language is adopted by a governor of Barbados, who admonishes us, "From policy to leave the Islands, to the quiet management of their own affairs." They have it seems been taught, that we have no right to control them; that the acts of their assemblies alone are obligatory; and that those of British legislators, are binding only on those whom they represent. The right of enslaving others, they contend for, as the most valuable of their privileges.

Thus it appears that the legislature is not only unwilling, but perhaps unable, to grant redress; and therefore it is more peculiarly incumbent on us; To abate from the use of sugar and rum, until our West India Planters themselves have prohibited the importation of additional slaves, and commenced as speedily and effectually a subversion of slavery in their islands, as the circumstances and situation of the slaves will admit: or till we can obtain the produce of the sugar cane in some other mode, unconnected with slavery, and unpolluted with blood.

For though the African slave trade, be the most prominent feature in this wickedness; yet it is but a feature; and were it abolished the West India slavery would still exist. Our planters would breed, instead of importing slaves, and shall we suffer half a million of fellow subjects, and their posterity, to be held in slavery for ever? I say, fellow subjects, for undoubtedly, every person born in the dominions of Great Britain, is a subject, bound to obey, and intitled to the protection of the common law of England; and in opposition to which, the acts of assemblies, can be of no authority.

In demanding liberty then for the persons called slaves in our Islands; we demand no more than they are intitled to by the common law. The most eligible mode of putting them in possession of their legal and natural right; may be a question of difficulty; but it is a question that ought to be considered with no other view, but to their happiness. The plan to be adopted, ought to be certain and speedy in its operation, without any consideration of the supposed, or even real interest, of their oppressors; and let it be remembered, that it is in the power of a small pro.
portion of the people of England to effect it, by refusing to receive the produce. The planters themselves would adopt the plan, were that the only means, by which they could find a sale at the British market; nor would the legislature be then harrassed with preposterous claims for compensation; which, however unfounded in justice or reason, might be supported by influence, and enforced with clamour.

If ignorance and inattention may be pleaded as our excuse hitherto, yet that can be the case no longer. The subject has been four years before the public. Its dreadful wickedness has been fully proved. Every falsehood, every deception with which it has been disguifed, has been completely done away; and it stands before us in all its native horrors. No longer can it be pretended, that Africa is a barbarous, uncultivated land, inhabited by a race of savages inferior to the rest of the human species. Mr How, who was employed by government to go up the country, deposes, that inland it is every where well cultivated, abounding with rice, millet, potatoes, cotton and indigo plantations; and that the inhabitants are quick in learning languages, and remarkably industrious, hospitable and obliging. It appears that they possess noble and heroic minds, disdaining slavery, and frequently seeking refuge from it in the arms of death. Nor shall we be again told, of the superior happiness they enjoy under the benevolent care of the planters, Mr Coor having deposed that setting slaves to work in the morning, is attended with loud peals of whipping;—and General Totten ham, "that there is no comparision between regimental "flogging, which only cuts the skin, and the plantation, "which cuts out the flesh,"—and Capt. Hall, "That "the punishments are very shocking, much more so than "in men of war,"—and Capt. Smith, "that at every "stroke of the whip, a piece of flesh is cut out,"—and Mr Rofs, "that he considers a comparision between West "India slaves and the British penfancy, as no insult to "common sense."

The case now fully lies before us; and we have to make our choice, either to join ourselves with these manufacturers of human woe, or to renounce the horrid association.
tion. If we adopt the former, let us at least have the
candour to avow our conduct in its real deformity. Let
us no longer affect to deplore the calamities attendant on
the Slave Trade, of which we are the primary cause: nor
let us pretend to execrate the conduct of the slave-dealer,
the slave-holder, or the slave-driver; but apologize for
them as our partners in iniquity: and be assured, that if
we now take our share in the transaction, we should,
were we placed in a similar situation with them, with as
little compunction take theirs; unless we can suppose
the order of nature would be so far inverted, as that we
should become virtuous, in proportion as the temptation
to vice increased. Nor should we then, any more than
now, be destitute of subterfuges to destroy the feelings of
our minds, and the conviction of our consciences. With
them we might pretend the inconsiderableness of our share
in the evil, or that the crime does not necessarily attach,
in regard to us: But were such excuses true, as they are
evidently false, yet would they not form a defence; even
supposing for a moment, that the calamities and oppres-
sion, had an existence from causes totally independent of
us. It is sufficient that a scene of calamity and oppression
exists, and that we have it in our power jointly with
others, to remedy it; and it is our duty to contribute
our share, in hope that others will theirs; nor indeed
should we on many other similar occasions resort to such
excuses; for instance.

Let us suppose the Algerines to establish sugar-plant-
tions, that it was the interest of a body of men amongst
us, that we should purchase sugar of the Algerines alone;
and that they should have influence sufficient with the
legislature, to procure prohibitory duties to prevent our
reforting to any other market than that of Algiers, and
that in consequence we took the whole of their produc-
tion. Let us suppose, that the Algerines should resort to the
banks of the Thanes for slaves, as the only place to be
inflicted with impunity. Suppose our wives, our hus-
bands, our children, our parents, our brethren, swept away,
and the fruit of their labour, produced with agonizing
hearts and trembling limbs, landed at the port of London.
What would be our conduct? Should we say, sugar is a
necessary
necessary of life, I cannot do without it; besides the quantity I use is but a small proportion, and though it is very criminal of the Algerines to enslave others, yet I am not bound to look to the nature or consequences of the transaction; and paying for the sugar, I have a right to consume it, however it may be obtained. If such would be our language, let it be so on the present occasion; as the only difference is, that our relation to the enslaved is rather more remote, but in both cases they are our brethren.

But it is hardly requisite to state so strong a case as that supposed: For were only one Englishman to receive injuries, that bore but the slightest resemblance to those daily committed in our islands, the whole nation would be inflamed with resentment, and clamorous to avenge the injury. And can our pride suggest to us, that the rights of men are limited to any nation, or to any colour. Or, were any one to treat a fellow creature in this country as we do the unhappy Africans in the West-Indies; struck with horror, we should be zealous to deliver the oppressed, and punish the oppressor. Are then the offices of humanity and functions of justice to be circumscribed by geographical boundaries? Can reason, can conscience justify this contrast in our conduct, between our promptitude in the one case, and our torpor in the other?—Mr. Addison justly observes, that “humanity to become estimable must be combined with justice!” But we seem to act as if we thought that the relief of our fellow-creatures, protection from injuries, communication of benefits, were works of supererogation to be granted or with-held, as caprice, or custom, or inclination may suggest.

We are now called on to redress evils, in comparison with which, all that exist in this nation sink beneath our notice; and the only sacrifice we are required to make in order to effect it, is the abandoning of a luxury which habit alone can have rendered of importance. If we refuse, can we form the least pretence to a moral character? May it not be justly inferred, that those numerous displays of humanity, of which this kingdom boasts, have not their foundation in any virtuous or valuable principle, but that to custom and ostentation they owe their origin?
And if our execration of the slave trade be any thing more than mere declamation against crimes we are not in a situation to commit, we shall instead of being solicitous to find desppicable distinctions to justify our conduct, abhor the idea of contributing, in the least degree, to such scenes of misery.

Hardened by habit, the mind is with difficulty accessible to the convictions of guilt. Our actions are not easily influenced by the force of moral principle, when counteracted by custom; and the grossest violations of duty may be practised without compunction, when sanctioned by the conduct of our associates. Such situations are more peculiarly the test of our virtue, and in such situations it is more peculiarly incumbent on us, to investigate our conduct with the most anxious solicitude; and guarded suspicion, and to fortify our minds with the force of moral principle, or the sanctions of religion. In proportion as we are under their influence, we shall not only refuse to do any act which tends to the injury of the unhappy African, but exert ourselves, to the utmost, in our respective situations, to extricate them from their calamities. For the consequence of our conduct may not be limited by its immediate effects. Our example, our admonitions, our influence may produce remote ones, of which we can form no estimate; and which, after having done our duty, must be submitted to Him who governs all things after the counsel of his own will.