

Royal Gazette, and Miscellany of the Island of Saint John.

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LONDON.

HOUSE OF COMMONS, APRIL 2.

SLAVE TRADE.

The House in a Committee; Sir Wm. Dolben in the chair.

Mr. WILBERFORCE, in a strain of nervous and elegant language, introduced his exordium to the long expected motion for the abolition of the African Slave Trade.

He lamented that the zealous endeavours of those humane and upright partizans, with whom he had the honour to act throughout the whole of these laborious (but as he felt them GLORIOUS) exertions! had hitherto failed; yet he lamented, still more, the inordinate principle of disgusting avarice, and unchristian cruelty, which had excited that failure.

But as he trusted that the mask of Self-interest, the veil of Covetousness, and even the disguise of Narrow Policy were all discovered, and the naked truth of Consistent Propriety, in the adoption of measures for abolishing the cursed traffic of the Slave Trade of Africa was now universally understood, little doubt remained in his mind but that the honest exertions of the friends of humanity and nature would succeed, and even Lucre itself

“Own all its faults, then swear to give them o'er.

“And never follow false Ambition more”

It was not his wish to repeat to the House the arguments which had already been advanced in support of the measure which he aimed at. Those which had at a former period been related were still fresh in the minds of Gentlemen, as well as the various facts established in support of them, which he was convinced, had made such an impression on their very souls as neither time nor circumstances could ever obliterate; convinced of this, he should content himself at present with taking that for granted; and, by even appealing to the INTEREST of those who were the most strenuous opposers of his endeavours, shew the absolute necessity as well as utility of agreeing to the measures which he should propose.

When he had first undertaken the momentous task of venturing to propose the

Abolition of the Slave Trade, the magnitude of the object could only be equalled by the difficulty which he met in the interested designs of hard hearted and merciless individuals, whose sinister and avaricious motives led them to oppose him. But he was happy still to find, that a British Senate was not to be exceeded in patience by the perseverance of avarice, nor the uniform zeal of humanity to be controuled by the paltry machinations of designing men.

Here Mr. Wilberforce recapitulated in general terms several leading points which he had advanced at former periods; and concluded these remarks with many pointed allusions to the distracted state of the French West India Colonies, all of which entirely proceeded from the spirit of despotism which so universally pervaded the whole West Indies.

A pamphlet had been published some years ago by a Carolina Planter, whose knowledge of trade and plantations in the West Indies had uniformly been considered as the very oracle of truth, which stated, that any insurrections which could happen in that part of the world, must always arise from the extraordinary number of men of colour in those Islands, in proportion to the whites. This entirely proceeded from the astonishing number imported yearly, which, taken at an average, could not be less than 27,000, torn from all that could be dear to them, and forced to slavery in a foreign soil.

To the active exertions of our Government in Jamaica, we certainly owed the preservation of that island at a late particular crisis. For he was sorry to find, that the men in colour exceeded in number 300,000, whilst the whites were scarcely 20,000. Such a vast disproportion of FOREIGN Slaves, under hard task masters, formed a most formidable phalanx: and he could not avoid thinking that the interest and welfare of the planters, as well as the peace and quiet of the empire, depended upon the proper treatment of those useful but degraded men; and still more depended upon the event of making them SUBJECTS, not Slaves—attaching them to the country where they live, and by giving them humane encouragement, lead them by gentle degrees to feel themselves AT HOME, and relish the satisfactions naturally

arising from domestic felicity, and a just reward for their labours.

Here he wished it might be understood, that it was not his intention, particularly at this crisis, to look for a total emancipation of Africans in the West Indies, but merely to establish laws for their benefit, their moral good, and their mental improvement; to prevent all further importation of them into the West Indies, and to establish those already there as citizens thereof; to give them liberty without licentiousness, and to make them willing servants to humane masters.

Here the hon. Gentleman glanced at the mischiefs which arise from the Slave Trade even to our own seamen, and drew a parallel between those employed in the West India merchantmen, and those engaged in the African Slave Trade, and shewed, that out of 7,640 employed in the former, during the space of seven months, only 118 were lost; whilst out of 12,743, engaged in the latter, there were lost in the course of twelve months 2,643. This circumstance alone, if he never adverted to any other fact, was sufficient in itself to prove the enormous mischiefs which only in that point proved the evils thereof; but when he considered the very traffic itself, and the disgrace annexed to it, he owned that his blood ran cold in his veins, and that he wept secretly when he reflected upon the acts committed by Britons in this vile, vile Trade.

Among various instances of unprecedented and murderous iniquity, he could not avoid relating a circumstance which had occurred no later than last August, a very short time after this subject had been agitated in that House, and at a time when it was imagined that the proceedings expected to occur thereon, would have some effect upon the minds of these heroic African Captains. But the reverse was the case. The crime which was committed by no less than six of them, was of such a tremendous and nefarious complexion, that he could not refrain from relating it—and therefore would.

Last August there arrived at Calabar, on the African coast, six vessels, three from Liverpool, and three from Bristol; when they came to an anchor and learned the price of slaves, they held a consultati-