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SLAVE TRADE, MAURITIUS.

RETURN to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 23d June 1829;—for,

COPY of a LETTER addressed by Sir *Robert T. Farquhar* to The Secretary of
State, dated 10th June 1829, upon the REPORT made by the Commissioners
of Inquiry on the Slave Trade at the *Mauritius*.

Downing-street, }
23d June 1829. }

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
24 June 1829.

SLAVE TRADE, MAURITIUS.

COPY of a LETTER addressed by Sir *Robert T. Farquhar* to The Secretary of State, dated 10th June 1829, upon the Report made by the Commissioners of Inquiry on the Slave Trade at the Mauritius.

Sir,

Richmond Terrace, June 10, 1829.

IN pursuance of a communication made to me by the Under Secretary of State, by your order, that the Report of the Commissioners on the Mauritius Slave Trade was open to my inspection at your office, I have the honour to state to you, that I have perused that Report, although it has been impossible for me to find time to wade through the very voluminous appendixes by which it was accompanied, consisting as they do of volumes as numerous and bulky as the Mauritius Archives themselves, and to bestow upon them a minute attention.

The Report, and the accompanying details to which it refers, I find, consist of a string of isolated occurrences, spread over the various administrations of the French Islands of Mauritius and Bourbon, during the last eighteen years, which the Commissioners have ransacked, the whole of which, that are of the slightest importance, had been previously reported to the Minister, or laid before the House of Commons and printed, together with the Mauritius Slave Trade Inquiry that took place in 1826, or of such details as are totally unworthy of the attention of the public.

In order to guard against confusion of persons, and to facilitate reference to dates, I beg leave to inform you that the government of the French Islands was administered by the following British Officers, at the several epochs included in the series of years above-mentioned.

Sir Robert T. Farquhar, from July 1810 to April 1811	
M. G. Sir Henry Ward, to July	- - - 1811
Sir Robert T. Farquhar, to November	- - - 1817
M. General G. T. Hall, acting to December	- 1818
M. General T. Dalrymple, acting to February	- 1819
M. General R. Darling, acting to July	- - 1820
Sir Robert T. Farquhar, to May	- - - 1823
M. General R. Darling, acting to June	- - 1823
Lieut. General the Hon. Sir G. L. Cole, to March	1828

Being the date of the Commissioners Report at the Mauritius.

Inasmuch as regards the periods above stated of my administration of the local government, the perusal of the Report itself has been sufficient to satisfy my mind as to the answers or explanations which such a production deserves from me; from one end to the other, as far as my penetration extends, not any single distinct and specific charge is brought forward against me individually, or my administration; but although the Commissioners, with all the advantages thrown into their hands both by the Parliament and the Government, have not been able to find any distinct charges, it is seen by the most superficial and careless observer, that groundless suspicions and insinuations of the most illiberal character are resorted to and thrown out in this production.

It appears to me that I am the more justified in the observation, as to the want of support of which I have reason to complain, at least from former administrations,

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trations, by my having been allowed to remain uninformed of the existence or nature of *the special instructions* transmitted to the Commissioners at the Mauritius from the Secretary of State's Office ; and *that* after Mr. Buxton's accusatory speech, and after the result of the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry, until the 4th of February last, I was then admitted to a knowledge of the proceedings of the Commissioners, by an inspection in your office of their Report, dated at Mauritius the 12th of March 1828, and founded on those special instructions, that is, two years after the prosecution of the inquiry at the Mauritius, involving my character, which had been commenced in the House of Commons, was ordered by the Secretary of State, and during which two intervening years, the investigation, *so transferred*, had been pursuing accordingly in my absence. You are, I am sure, too candid and too generous not to pardon any undue warmth of expression on this occasion ; for in my case it would only imply a callousness to the best impulses of our nature, if I did not express as I feel, strongly, the aggravated extent of the injury I have experienced.

But, to revert to the Report, having deliberately considered the contents of it, and not wishing to confide exclusively in my own judgment, I consulted a judicious friend ; as he has come to the same conclusion as myself after perusing it with great attention, namely, that it is the most inconclusive, vague, incoherent and frivolous rhapsody that was ever produced in the shape of a public document ; as he is equally at a loss with myself to discover any distinct accusations, charges or imputations against me worthy of consideration, I have no alternative but respectfully to submit to you, for the information of His Majesty's government, that the whole, as regards myself or my administration, appears to be in its result a laboured attempt to bolster up, and by the same unworthy means, the imputations thrown against me in the House of Commons in the session of 1826, imputations which were so triumphantly refuted and demolished in the despatches of my successor, Sir Lowry Cole, as well as by the evidence that my opponents themselves had called in the Mauritius Committee, which the movers of that Committee obtained from the pliant liberality of Mr. Canning.

Resting, so far as it went, upon the evidence of that Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry (the course selected by the honourable Member for Weymouth himself), as affording satisfactory proof that the measures adopted by me were well calculated, under the circumstances of the Colonies of Mauritius and Bourbon, not only to suppress but extinguish the Slave Trade, and that every exertion, and all the legal means in my power and at my disposal, were zealously used to effect that great object, which I ultimately, and in a comparatively short period of time, succeeded in accomplishing. Referring to my correspondence in the Secretary of State's Office, for the vindication of the entire line of conduct which, during the whole of the eventful period of my long administration, I pursued for securing those possessions to the Crown, and settling them in tranquil obedience to the laws and to His Majesty's Government, conduct which has hitherto earned for me the express approbation of my King and country ; and relying upon the admitted and notorious fact, proved by the surest of all tests, by observation and experience, and the actual state and condition of those countries, that that line of conduct which I pursued was also well calculated to increase the wealth and strength of those British dependencies, at the same time that it contributed to promote the real happiness and comfort of every class of His Majesty's subjects under my government, as well as to hasten the march of civilization in the independent native states in the neighbourhood of that interesting part of the globe. Referring to all these irrefragable facts, and conclusive evidence of the efficacy of the measures adopted by me during the several periods above-mentioned of my administration of the French Islands, I am disposed to treat the vague surmises and illiberal insinuations of the Commissioners, with that inattention and indifference, to use the mildest terms, which their proceedings, and the line they have pursued, on their own shewing, and *on their own responsibility, for the last two years at the Mauritius, during my absence, and my total ignorance of their secret and unconstitutional inquiries*, seem to me alone to merit.

It is obviously impossible, under these circumstances, when there is a studied attempt not to prove charges, but to *raise a mist*, and to throw a colouring over facts, which are intended to lead to unfavourable inferences, to serve party purposes,

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I say it is impossible for any man to fix the meaning of an antagonist, who resorts to insinuations and inuendos, as the only weapons that he dares to wield.

In one instance only, do the Commissioners state, intelligibly and unambiguously, that the circumstances attending a pardon that I was empowered to grant, have not been satisfactorily explained. That pardon was granted to Dorval, it was promised as the only effectual means, after all others had been tried in vain by the police and law officers of the Colony, and after large offers of reward, and of impunity to informers on the part of the government, by proclamations, which were communicated to the Secretary of State, had failed for a length of time, in bringing a flagrant violation of the abolition laws before the competent tribunal, for punishment and example. At last, after the culprits had fled to Bourbon and returned, it was concerted and agreed between D'Hotman (one of the "purgamenta urbium," a spy and informer, employed by me in the execution of the abolition laws,) and Dorval, that the latter was to give the signal to the former, to take L'Hoste prisoner by surprise, as they were walking together, on condition of a promise of a pardon being granted by me to his friend Dorval; and for this purpose he, D'Hotman, was to be previously constituted by me a special constable, and in case of success, was to receive a handsome reward. The plan did succeed, and L'Hoste was apprehended and secured by D'Hotman, through the means of Dorval. It is obvious, from the nature of the population of the Mauritius, and the great prejudice which prevails amongst the French against informers, that the extremest secrecy and management throughout the business was requisite, to effect what I considered, whatever may be the doubts or surmises expressed or entertained by the Commissioners, as one of my most successful measures against unprincipled slave dealers, by which they found that there was no safety for them, even from their own comrades and participators in the same crime; and after which, so effectual was this blow to their hopes, together with the other measures I had adopted with a view to extinguish the traffic in those seas, that no instance of an attempt to land slaves in the Mauritius from that time to the present day, has been made. As to the remark of the Commissioners of Inquiry, that "*it is apparent*" that the pardon of Dorval occasioned a strong repugnance in the mind of Judge "Smith to any further proceeding in the case of L'Hoste's trial," having acted as Chief Commissioner of the Special Court on that trial, I can positively deny this to be the fact. That extraordinary proceeding was, in my opinion, (and the expression of this conviction on my mind is extracted from me by the sinister insinuations of the Commissioners,) levelled at the Attorney General Christie, whom the Judge wished to supersede, by exposing him as incapable of drawing an indictment correctly. And in confirmation of the truth of this observation, I beg leave to refer you to my despatches N^o 18 and N^o 21, of 1822, conveying my view and sentiments on the proceedings in the case of L'Hoste, together with the official report of that trial, to the Secretary of State; which despatches and proceedings, "*it must be obvious*" that the Commissioners of Inquiry might and ought to have had access, and referred to, in the Colony, before venturing upon such unfounded conjectures on the subject, if they had been equally as desirous of consulting evidence in favour of as against my conduct, in the administration of public affairs at Mauritius. The result of this plan for the arrest of L'Hoste and Dorval, in a financial point of view, was a saving to the Government of three thousand dollars; as two thousand dollars had been offered by proclamation for the apprehension of each of them, whereas the whole business was, through my management, effected for one thousand dollars.

In returning you my cordial thanks, for having afforded me the opportunity of perusing, at your office, the Commissioners Report on the Mauritius Slave Trade, I trust you will excuse me, if I respectfully state my expectation, that if that Report should appear to you in a different light from what it does to me, or that there be any distinct and tangible charges which require specific explanation on my part, you will be so good as communicate them to me, that I may be thus enabled to afford you all the information which you may desire.

In conclusion, with regard to the question as affecting the national character and the honour of the Government, I do not feel myself called upon to make any remark or commentary, further than this general one, that the public documents, as laid before Parliament, prove the public charges, equally with those against me, to be totally groundless.

But

OF COMMISSIONERS OF INQUIRY AT THE MAURITIUS.

But inasmuch as I am individually concerned, I trust it will not be deemed presumptuous in me, under all the circumstances of the case, and after the result of all the inquiry that has been had in this country, as well as on the spot at the Mauritius, to express an expectation, *either* that Mr. Buxton should be required to go on without further delays, and bring the inquiry to a conclusion; *or* that he should declare in his place, that as no charges were produced in the inquiry to affect my character as Governor of Mauritius, so he was ready to admit that he was misled or mistaken; *or* failing Mr. Buxton's explanation, that there should be a declaration from the proper quarter, on the part of His Majesty's Government, that Mr. Buxton had not been justified in the charges or insinuations which he had thrown out against me as late Governor of the Mauritius. One of these alternatives I think I am justly entitled to expect, not as Member of Parliament, nor a private individual, but as a late servant of the Crown, who is entitled to the protection of Government so long as his public conduct stands unimpeached.

I have the honour to be, with great respect,

SIR,

Your most obedient humble servant,

R. T. Farquhar.

To the Right Honourable Sir George Murray, K. G. C.

&c. &c. &c.

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