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S L A V E R Y.

RETURN to an Address of The Honourable House of Commons,  
Dated 1 July 1828;—for

Copy of a LETTER from the Colonial Secretary to the  
Lieut.-Governor of Jamaica; dated 22d Sept. 1827.

Colonial Department, }  
Downing-street, }  
4 July 1828. }

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*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 10 July 1828.*

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Downing-street, 22d September 1827.

SIR,

IT would be difficult for me to state to you, so fully as I feel the pain which it gives me, that my first official communications to you should contain an exposition of the reasons which have induced His Majesty's Servants (not, I can assure you, without serious deliberation and much regret) to advise His Majesty to withhold his sanction from the Act passed last December, for altering and amending the Slave Laws of Jamaica.

I feel so sincerely anxious to omit no opportunity, not clearly inconsistent with my public duty, of endeavouring to cultivate a conciliatory disposition on all matters now pending between my Office and the local Authorities in Jamaica, that it would have afforded me a high gratification to have been enabled to meet their views on this, the most important of all, as I trust I have manifested a readiness to do in what relates to the collection and management of the Customs Revenue of the Island.

If it had been possible, in the consideration of the Act to which I refer, to have abstracted from it some clauses which, I must own to you, appear to me more in the nature of what, in Parliamentary parlance, may be called a "*tack*," than as strictly relevant to the subject-matter of the law itself, I might, perhaps, have felt more hesitation than I have now in concurring with my colleagues in advising His Majesty to reject the present law. The clauses to which I more particularly advert, are those which appear, I must say, to have been framed in a spirit of intolerance towards the religious missions which have so long existed exempt from such restraints and persecution in Jamaica. Without any personal predilection for the doctrines either of the Wesleyans, Moravians, or other Protestant Dissenters, I have always understood, from intelligent persons acquainted with the Colonies, and

upon

## LETTER FROM COLONIAL SECRETARY

upon these matters as impartial as myself, that these Missionaries (especially in the absence of an adequate Church Establishment) had materially contributed to the religious and moral instruction of the slaves, inculcating, as a part of that instruction, contentment with their lot, and the duties of peaceable behaviour, and of obedience to their owners. This prepossession in favour of the usefulness of their labours, I believe to be general in this country; and sure I am, that there is no feeling more general than that which revolts at any attempt to visit with punishment and degradation, the conscientious teachers of Christianity, of whatever denomination, for such acts as those which are prohibited, or raised into offences, by the clauses in question.

Not to draw invidious comparisons between Ministers of the Protestant and the Catholic Church, I will content myself with asking how could it possibly be expected that we should advise His Majesty to prohibit and punish, in the persons of the former, acts, the doing of which the same law takes especial care expressly to permit to the professors of Judaism?

I have said, I am sure, enough to impress upon your mind, that it will not be in the power of His Majesty's Government at any time hereafter to countenance regulations of this description; and to show you the necessity of strictly attending to that part of my public dispatch of this date, which enjoins you not to assent to any Bill imposing restraints of this nature, unless a clause be inserted for suspending its operation until His Majesty's pleasure shall be known.

From the perusal of that dispatch you will perceive on how many other points, more immediately connected with the professed object of the law—the melioration of the Slave Code,—its provisions have greatly disappointed the expectations of His Majesty's Government. I cannot divest myself of a sanguine hope, that upon a temperate reconsideration of those provisions, with a reference to the observations which I have felt it my duty to make upon them in my public dispatch, the next session of the Legislature will enable you to transmit to this country a new law upon this subject, in which the defects of the existing law may be remedied, and some of its most important omissions supplied.

Should such a law be transmitted through me for the consideration of the Privy Council, I shall enter upon its examination with an anxious desire to do justice to the Council and Assembly of Jamaica, and to place in the most favourable point of view every thing which it may contain of real and substantial improvement; trusting that, in whatever degree it might still fall short of the measures contemplated by the Parliament and Government of this country, the time would not be distant at which a further approximation to these measures might, in the judgment of the local Authorities, be found consistent with the safety and well understood interests of the Island.

It is under the influence of a feeling similar to this, in respect to Barbados, that the Privy Council have advised His Majesty to give his sanction to the new slave law of that Colony, although they could not shut their eyes, at the same time, to the many and important improvements of which it is still susceptible. Comparing it with the old code of Barbados, our policy has been to accept the positive good which is effected by the new law, and to look forward to the prospect of that law receiving from the Legislature of Barbados, at no distant period, the meliorating clauses which are still wanting.

I cannot

## TO THE LIEUT.-GOVERNOR OF JAMAICA.

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I cannot conclude this letter, without imploring your best assistance towards the accomplishment of those arrangements, which every man acquainted with the state and influence of public opinion in this country must be sensible can alone avert all the evils, which it is otherwise to be apprehended will infallibly ensue from a continued misunderstanding, and growing irritation, between the British Parliament and the Legislature of Jamaica, on the delicate and intricate subject to which I have now so far claimed your attention.

I have, &c.

(signed) WM HUSKISSON.

Major-General

Sir John Keane, K. C. B.

&c. &c. &c.

SLAVERY.

LETTER

From the Colonial Secretary to the Lieut.-Governor  
of Jamaica ;  
Dated 22d September 1827.

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*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,*  
*10 July 1828.*

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