

dom to its plantations, to be owned by Christian men, held in servitude there with their children, and compelled by the scourge to labor without requitance for the proprietor, whose money had been paid for them. The horrors of the Slave-trade and of Slavery are, as it respects our own country, now matters of history. Britain, slow, in this instance at least, to be just, yet magnanimous in her justice at length, has wiped away from her the horrible stigma, and we need not now dilate upon the enormity of its crime. We advert to it in this place only to illustrate the effects of custom upon conscience. Senators of honour and humanity defended the Slave-trade in Parliament; merchants of wealth and name embarked their capital in the enterprise. It was often proclaimed that the commerce and the comfort of the kingdom were very materially dependent on the slave-grown productions. Thousands of families of the highest refinement—aye, of Christian refinement too—were maintained in luxury upon the profits that had been wrung from the cruel and unrequited labour of the negro. The public mind had become accustomed to it. Those who profited by it succeeded for a time, by concealments and misrepresentations, to gain currency for the opinion, that notwithstanding the concomitant evils, the cause of humanity was on the whole promoted by the Slave-trade. Some there were who quoted Scripture for the deed, and asserted that the curse of Ham rested upon the negro—that he was doomed by God to be a servant of servants—that from his very nature he was fit for nothing else. Was it strange that a mercantile and money-making people should become reconciled to a system that rewarded them with a harvest of gain, and that they should treat with disfavour its opponents who attempted to prove, that it was at variance not

only with a sound commercial policy, but with that divine morality which can never be disregarded either by an individual or a nation without condign retribution? In the midst, however, of that long agitation of the principles involved in the question, which finally triumphed in the British Legislature, the consciences of many good men, whose temporal interests were concerned in its settlement, were wonderfully quiet. Their agents in the plantations bought cheap slaves wherever they could find them, without any nice enquiry into the title of those who sold;—they themselves received the products of their labour without any nice enquiry as to the means by which it had been extorted, or whether the labourer had received his just reward. They talked the while, too, with Christian intelligence, of justice and humanity, and save in this one matter, perhaps, they were just and humane; and here only they came short because they did not ask with a candid spirit, What the Lord required of them, but were content to follow the prevalent custom, oftentimes ingeniously and plausibly defended by mercenaries, whose interests had sharpened their wits while it had stupefied their consciences. Now that the national stigma has been branded on the Slave-trade, in conformity with the principles of a divine morality, no man feels any difficulty in declaring for himself the rectitude of every principle on which that infamous traffic has been condemned. Reflecting seriously upon these principles, neither deep nor doubtful, but standing out as the simplest elements of moral rectitude, we wonder how enlightened and good men should have contrived so long to repudiate them; and we can find no explanation of the fact but this, that when men ask themselves, in regard to any matter in which their temporal interests are involved, What do the