

POOR BLACK KATE.

CRUELITIES PERPETRATED BY HENRY AND HELEN MOSS, ON THEIR SLAVE KATE, IN THE BAHAMAS.

He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are an abomination to the Lord.---Prov. xvii. 15.

It appears that the Governor, General Grant, was absent from the colony when these crimes were perpetrated, and the authors of them were brought to trial. Mr. President Munnings was then acting as his substitute. This gentleman, whom we greatly honour for his conduct on this occasion, transmitted to Earl Bathurst on the 5th of April 1827, the following account of the matter.

"*Henry Moss*, esq. of Crooked Island, having been accused of excessive cruelty to a negro girl slave, by confining her for the period of seventeen days and nights in the stocks, without intermission, by giving her, while in that situation, task which she was unable to perform, and by causing her to be repeatedly flogged for the non-performance of such task; and after releasing her from the stocks, by having sent her to labour in the fields, before she had recovered from the effects of her confinement, and by having caused her to be flogged in the fields, (and the girl having died in the field on the morning after she had received one of those floggings), and Mr. Henry Moss jointly with his wife *Helen*, having been accused of rubbing red pepper (capsicum) upon the eyes of this girl, the attorney-general preferred a bill of indictment against Mr. Moss and his wife for murder. The grand jury having returned 'Not found' upon this bill, the attorney-general preferred two other bills for misdemeanours, one against Mr. Moss, the other against Mr. Moss and his wife. Both these bills were found by the grand jury, and after a very full and patient investigation of the circumstances of the case before the petit jury, during a trial of upwards of sixteen hours' duration, a verdict of guilty was returned upon both indictments.

"The court sentenced Mr. and Mrs. Moss to imprisonment in the common gaol at Nassau, for five calendar months, and Mr. Moss to the payment of a fine of £300, over and besides the costs of the prosecution.

"I have been solicited to remit or to shorten the term of

LONDON: SOLD BY HARVEY AND DARTON; WESTLEY AND DAVIS;
HOULSTON AND SON; AND OTHER BOOKSELLERS.
[PECKHAM.] Price 3s. 6d. per 100.

Mrs. Moss's imprisonment, but I shall in no degree whatever alter the sentence of the general court, by the extension of mercy to those by whom it appears none was exercised."

In a few weeks General Grant returned to the Bahamas and resumed his command. He was immediately applied to "by the most respectable inhabitants of the town and colony," to remit the sentence of Mr. and Mrs. Moss; and he lost no time in applying to Lord Bathurst in a letter dated 18th May 1827, to authorise such remission. "The unfortunate Henry and Helen Moss," he tells his Lordship, "are rather to be pitied for the untoward melancholy occurrence which has taken place;" he therefore hastens to prevent the impression the bare mention of the case might make on his Lordship's mind. In a letter of a later date (3d July 1827,) he recurs with much solicitude to the subject. It expresses a strong sense of the respectability of Mr. and Mrs. Moss, and of their general kindness to their slaves, and refers to the high estimation in which they are held by "all who have visited Mr. Moss, and partaken of his hospitality." Nay; "Mr. Moss, and especially Mrs. Moss, have never been otherwise than favourably spoken of in every respect, including that of his slave management." The Governor, in short, is most anxious that "persons of their respectability might be spared from imprisonment; and at least, that Lord Bathurst will allow him to relinquish the mulct" lest they should be "held cruel and oppressive *beyond others*," and also in order, in some degree, "to remove the impression of their being deemed habitually and notoriously cruel." But he adds, and the addition is most significative of colonial feeling on such subjects; "Notwithstanding their being in gaol, they are visited by the most respectable persons in the place, and by ALL who knew them before. This would not be the case even here, if it was the public opinion that the treatment of Mr. Moss's slaves in general was unduly severe!"

The nature of this transaction will best appear from the following despatch of Mr. Secretary Huskisson to the Governor, General Grant, dated Downing Street, 28th September, 1827.

"I have received your despatch of the 3d July last, transmitting the minutes of evidence on the trial of Henry and Helen Moss, suggesting certain considerations in their favour, and recommending the remittal of the fine which formed a part of their sentence.

"These persons have been found guilty of a misdemeanour for their cruelty to their slave Kate; and those facts of the case which are proved beyond dispute, appear to be as follows:

"Kate was a domestic slave, and is stated to have been guilty of theft; she is also accused of disobedience, in refusing to mend her clothes and do her work, and this was the more immediate cause of her punishment. On the 22d of July 1826, she was confined in the stocks, and she was not released till the 8th of August following, being a period of seventeen days. The stocks were so constructed, that she could not sit up and lie down at pleasure, and she remained in them night and day. During this period she was flogged repeatedly, one of the overseers thinks about six times, and red pepper was rubbed upon her eyes to prevent her sleeping. Tasks were given her which, in the opinion of the same overseer, she was incapable of performing; sometimes because they were beyond her powers, at other times because she could not see to do them on account of the pepper having been rubbed on her eyes; and she was flogged for failing to accomplish these tasks. A violent distemper had been prevalent on the plantation during the summer. It is in evidence, that on one of the days of Kate's confinement she complained of fever, and that one of the floggings which she received was the day after she had made this complaint. When she was taken out of the stocks she appeared to be cramped, and was then again flogged. The very day of her release she was sent to field labour, (though heretofore a house servant), and on the evening of the third day ensuing, was brought before her owners as being ill and refusing to work, and she then again complained of having had fever. They were of opinion that she had none then, but gave directions to the driver if she should be ill to bring her to them for medicines in the morning. The driver took her to the negro-house, and again flogged her; though, this time, apparently without orders from her owners to do so. In the morning, at seven o'clock, she was taken to work in the field, where she died at noon.

"The facts of the case are, thus far, incontrovertibly established; and I deeply lament, that, heinous as the offences are which this narrative exhibits, I can discover no material palliation of them amongst the other circumstances detailed in the evidence."

Since this transaction took place General Grant, we re-

gret to learn, has been promoted from the petty government of the Bahamas, to the far more important situation of governor of Trinidad, where he will have to carry into execution his Majesty's plans of West Indian reform;—the grand experiment of amelioration which Mr. Canning held out as the *model* after which the whole frame of our colonial policy was to be moulded. This is an appointment which, judging from our only means of knowledge, seems highly inauspicious both for the slaves, the subjects of the experiment, and for those also who have undertaken their cause, and who will be made answerable, at least by their opponents and detractors, for its failure.

To conclude, if we would duly estimate the state of feeling, in a community corrupted by slavery, and the evil that must follow from leaving it to such communities to legislate for their unhappy dependents, we should contrast the burst of execration which, a few days ago, in this capital, added bitterer agonies to the stroke of justice which fell upon the wretched Esther Hibner; with the general sympathy excited, among the colonists of the Bahamas, with the more lenient fate of Henry and Helen Moss, two not less guilty criminals.—ANTI-SLAVERY REPORTER, No. 47.

Surely, to those who attempt to justify slavery, and to represent the state of the poor slaves as superior to that of freemen, may be addressed the language of the prophet Isaiah: "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!—which justify the wicked for reward, and take the righteousness of the righteous from him!"

"Yes, thus it is;---yet not unpaid
His tyranny prevails;
And all his barbarous deeds are weighed
In heaven's unerring scales.
And when the dark and silent grave
Its gloomy jaws shall close,
And the stern master and his slave
Alike in dust repose,---
Each bursting sigh, each bitter tear,
Each bosom's tortured beat,
Shall then in black array appear
Before the judgment seat."

*Lately published,---THE NEGRO'S FRIEND, Part 2, 1d. or 7s. per 100,
and various small Publications on SLAVERY.*

London: Bagster and Thoins, Printers, Bartholomew Close.