

Proceedings of Congress.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Friday, March 12.

THE bill for granting compensation to Col. Ely was read a second time and referred to the committee of the whole House, to be taken into consideration this day fortnight.

Several petitions were read and referred.

Mr. Bland observed that private memorials and petitions have increased so much, that very shortly, the attention of every individual member of the House, will be taken up in the investigation of the facts set forth in those petitions, to the great interruption of the business of the nation.

He therefore moved the following resolutions in substance:

1st. That all memorials and petitions for claims presented to the House, be referred the heads of departments to report thereon.

2d. That the committee to whom memorials and petitions have been referred be discharged from any further attention to the same; and that they be referred as above.—Laid on the table.

In committee on the whole, on the report of the Secretary of the Treasury, for making provision for the support of public credit.

The third proposition or alternative was read, viz.

3dly "To have sixty-six and two thirds dollars funded, at a yearly interest of six per cent. irredeemable also by any payment exceeding four and two thirds dollars per annum; on both of principal and interest; and to have at the end of ten years, eighty dollars and eighty eight cents. funded at the like interest, and rate of redemption."

Mr. Lee moved, that the whole proposition be rejected—which occasioned a debate, and the question being taken on the motion, it passed in the negative.

Mr. Jackson's motion for striking out these words, "irredeemable also by any payment exceeding four and two thirds dollars per annum, on account of both principal and interest, was then read, and after some debate, was also negatived.

Mr. Fitzsimons, after premising some observations respecting a more rapid extinction of the principal, than is contemplated, by the Secretary proposed that four and two-thirds dollars should be struck out, in order to introduce a higher rate of payment per annum—He mentioned six per cent. on account of principal and interest.

Mr. Madison mentioned a still higher sum.

Four and two-thirds dollars after some debate were struck out, and the proposition with the blank passed over.

The following propositions were rejected, viz.

"4thly. To have an annuity for the remainder of life, upon the contingency of living to a given age, not less than ten years, computing interest at 4 per cent."

"5thly. To have an annuity for the remainder, of life, on the contingency of the survivorship of the youngest of two persons, computing interest in this case at four per cent."

The committee then rose, and the House adjourned till to-morrow.

Saturday, March 13.

The House resolved itself into a committee on the report of the Secretary of the Treasury.

The remainder of Mr. Fitzsimons's propositions were debated—and agreed to.

The committee then rose, and the accepting of their report was postponed till Monday.

Monday, March 15.

The House resolved itself into a committee on the whole, on the appropriation bill; after some time spent thereon, rose and reported progress.

It was ordered that the bill should be engrossed for a third reading.

The House then resolved itself into a committee of the whole, on the bill respecting the Western Frontiers. After which the galleries were cleared.

Tuesday, March 16.

Mr. Boudinot moved to take up the report of the committee on the memorial of the people called Quakers; after some opposition the report was agreed to. The report was then read.

Mr. Tucker moved to modify the first paragraph, by striking out all the words after the word "opinion, and to insert the following:

"That the several memorials propose to the consideration of this house, a subject, on which its interference would be unconstitutional, and even its deliberations highly injurious to some of the states in the union."

Mr. Jackson rose and observed, that he had been silent on the subject of the report's coming before the committee, because he wished the principles of the resolutions to be examined fairly and to be decided on their true grounds. He was against the propositions generally, and would examine the policy, the justice, and the use of them; and he hoped if he could make them appear in the same light to others as they did to him, by fair argument, that the gentlemen in opposition were not so determined in their opinions, as not to give up their present sentiments.

With respect to the policy of the measure, the situation of the slaves here, their situation in their native states, and the disposal of them in case of emancipation, should be considered.

That slavery was an evil habit, he did not mean to controvert; but that habit was already established, and there were peculiar situations in countries which rendered that habit necessary.—Such situations the states of South-Carolina and Georgia were in; large tracts of the most fertile lands on the continent remained uncultivated for the want of population. It was frequently advanced on the floor of Congress, how unhealthy those climates were, and how impossible it was for the northern contributions even to exist there. What, he asked, is to be done with this uncultivated territory? Is it to remain waste? Is the rice trade to be banished from our coasts? Are Congress willing to deprive themselves of the revenue arising from that trade, and which is daily increasing, and to throw this great advantage into the hands of other countries? He begged the house to consider that Spain had lands fit for those purposes in the Floridas and the coast of Mexico: With the restraints Congress were about imposing on their own citizens, Spain would not only rival us, but in a short period engross the trade altogether: and what were those restraints to be imposed for? Not for any real necessity which existed—not on account of the true state of slavery which existed—but to gratify the supposed feelings—the theoretical speculations on humanity, of a society of Quakers, not at all interested in the event.

Let us examine their situation in their own country (I mean the nations of Africa) and draw a parallel between that and their situation here. Ruled by despots, and habituated to that rule, imbibed even with their mother's milk, in vain we contend for their freedom here, if we cannot cure that evil at home. In vain we hold forth the Heaven-born principle, if we cannot eradicate this inherent impression. I am not willing, sir, that the committee should receive all I say, as facts, without sufficient proof. Facts, sir, I wish to bring forward, and from facts I wish the committee to decide. The great and able writer

on the ranks of society (Mr. Millar) I offer as my authority—the best authority on that topic I believe in being.—On this subject he makes the following observations in his 23d page: "Among the negroes upon the slave-coast, the wife is never allowed to appear before the husband, nor to receive any thing from his hands, without putting herself in a kneeling posture." Is it possible, if this is the usage of the wife of the despot's bosom—the usage of the wife of every petty despot, that their manners are not more arbitrary to others, and that it is not inherent in their natures to tend to despotism? I think, sir, it cannot be denied. Again, says this author, "In the kingdom of Congo, and among the greater part of the nations which inhabit the southern coast of Africa, the women of a family are seldom allowed to eat with the men.—The husband sits alone at table, and the wife commonly stands at his back to guard him from the flies, to serve him with his victuals, or furnish him with his pipe and tobacco. After he has finished his meal, she is allowed to eat what remains, but without sitting down, which it seems would be inconsistent with the inferiority and submission that is thought suitable to her sex. When a Hottentot and his wife have come into the service of an European, and are entertained under the same roof, the matter is under the necessity of assigning to each of them a distinct portion of victuals, which, out of regard to the general usage of the country, they always devour at a distance from one another."

It may be here advanced, that those instances allude only to the women. I beg the patience of the committee, and that they will attend to another passage of this author. "The kingdom of Congo, upon the southern coast of Africa, is divided into many large districts or provinces, the inhabitants of which seem to have made some progress in agriculture. Each of these districts comprehends a multitude of small lordships, which are said to have been formerly independent, but which are now united together, and reduced under a single chief or governor, who exercises absolute authority over them. The great lords or governors of provinces are in like manner dependent on the king, and owe him the payment of certain annual duties. This monarch is understood to have an unlimited power over the goods of all his subjects, and he is the proprietor of all the lands in the kingdom, which return to the crown on the death of the possessors, and according to the arbitrary will of the prince, are either continued in the same, or bestowed upon a different family. All the inhabitants are bound to appear in the field whenever they are required by the sovereign, who is able in a short time to raise a prodigious army upon any sudden emergency. Every governor has a judicial power in his own district, and from his sentences there lies an appeal to the king, who is the supreme judge of the nation. Similar accounts are given of the constitution in the neighbouring kingdoms of Angola, Loango, and Benin." Those kingdoms, Mr. Chairman, are of that number from whence slaves are imported into the United States. I will call on every gentleman on the floor—I will appeal to the Quakers themselves, if those nations are not in the most horrid state of slavery.—Their despots are their supreme judges, not only of persons but of property.—Let the impartial eye view, and the impartial mind contemplate those different situations, and then decide if the situation of slaves here is not immensely preferable. Sir, in those countries, by what we have been quoted, we find that the tender affections are not cultivated, and as in other uncivilized countries, when age comes on and service can be no longer expected, the aged receive no protection. Here, sir, in addition to the ties of humanity, the law interposes in

favour of the aged and decrepid, and there are punishments where the matter exceeds the ordinary bounds. In the state I come from, the matter is as liable to be punished for the death of his slave, as for that of any other person; there is no doubt but that other states have similar guards against oppression.

I call on gentlemen to shew me a single instance of a nation in Europe in the state of the slave trade, where it has been abolished. In England, sir, notwithstanding repeated attempts, it is a question of such magnitude—nay, I may be allowed the expression, on account of their merchants and colonies—it is a question so ingrained with their constitution, that they cannot, dare not, touch it. Shall we then, sir, undertake this business when whole states are concerned, and for the gratification of a volunteering society of Quakers? for the gratification of a Warner Mifflin, who, trembling under the lash of an evil conscience, and fearing the just punishment of an avenging rod in a thunder storm, to atone for his numerous hoard of former sins, manumitted his negroes? Sir, I call the deed not an act of humanity—I call it not the superior effusion of the noble qualities of the heart—it was a death-bed repentance—the fear of torments in a future world, and the terrors of eternal damnation. Is America—is every individual to act on the same plan to atone for his sins? Will Congress volunteer it also, and say it shall be the case?

The people, sir, advance that they act from a Christian disposition. Christianity is not repugnant to slavery; and to confirm this position, I will read a few words more from the same author, and for whose introduction I shall apologize. "Other causes (says he, speaking of the former situation of Europe) have been assigned for this remarkable change of European manners. The establishment of Christianity has been supposed by many, to be the principal circumstance which rooted out the practice of slavery, to universally permitted and encouraged among all the heathen nations. There is no doubt, that the spirit of this religion, which considers all mankind as children of the same father, and as all equally the children of his parental care and affection, should inspire them with compassion for the miseries of each other, and should teach the opulent and proud to consider those who are depressed with labour and penury, as creatures of the same species, to treat them with mildness and humanity, and to soften the rigours to which their severe and unequal fortune has unavoidably subjected them. But it does not seem to have been the intention of Christianity to abolish the distinctions of rank, or to alter the civil rights of mankind, which were already established.—There is no precept of the gospel by which the authority of the master is in any respect restrained or limited, but on the contrary, there are several passages from which it may be inferred, that the slaves, even after they embraced the Christian religion, were not absolved from any part of the duties formerly incumbent on them."

Thus, then, Mr. Chairman, will those Quakers perceive, that they are not acting up to the spirit of Christianity in their present undertaking; but diametrically opposite to the commands of their divine master, Jesus Christ, who allowed it in his day, and his Apostles after him. Oneysimus, notwithstanding his conversion to Christianity, is understood by the Apostle Paul to continue still the slave of Philemon, and it is not supposed that the master, who was also a Christian, was under an obligation to relinquish any part of his authority; far less to give liberty to his servant. For this I refer them to St. Paul's epistle to Philemon. Do these good Quakers want more texts as proofs? Let them look into the 13th chap. Romans, verse 11. Ephesians, chap. 6, verse