

Printed Prospectus of the first volume on the History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, by Thomas Clarkson

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PROSPECTUS

Of the First Volume of a Work, which is to be comprised in Two thick Octavo Volumes, containing the History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of that great Event, The ABOLITION of the SLAVE-TRADE: with proper Engravings.

BY THOMAS CLARKSON.

THE Author, after having explained the nature of the Slave-Trade, shows that, from the very establishment of it, Individuals began to be raised up who may be considered as so many preparatory Instruments for bringing about its Abolition. These he divides into four Classes, as they took up this Cause on grounds independently of each other.

The First Class consisted of Persons, chiefly in England, of various religious denominations. These followed one another, from Richard Baxter in 1660 to the Poet Cowper in 1787. They were forty-three in number. Their Names, with interesting Extracts from their Publications, both in Poetry and Prose, are given.

The Second consisted of the Friends in England. 1. Of George Fox. 2. Of the Friends as a Body, both as they attempted to purify their own Members from the guilt of this commerce, and as they attempted to awaken the Legislature and to enlighten the Public Mind upon it. 3. Of six Individuals, who came out of the Body at large in 1783, and were found acting as a little Committee by themselves in 1787. The different Measures and Resolutions both of the Society and of these Individuals on this great Subject are recorded also.

The Third consisted of the Friends in America from 1696 to 1774. 1. Of the Friends as a Body in their six different Yearly Meetings. 2. Of the Friends as individual Labourers by themselves within the same period. 3. Of Individuals who came out of the Body at large in 1774, and were joined in that year by persons of various other religious denominations. An Account of this important Junction is detailed, and of the more full Organization of this united Class in 1787.

The Fourth consisted of Dr. Peckard in 1784, of the Author in 1785, of William Wilberforce, Esq. in 1786, and of those who followed. Here the Author gives an account of the providential manner in which he was induced to attend to this great Cause; of the Struggle he had in abandoning his Pursuits in Life to devote himself to it; of his own solitary Labours; and of his junction, by degrees, with others, till the Class now mentioned was formed.

Having shown that four distinct Classes, in each of which certain Individuals seemed to have had a preparatory education, as if to qualify them for taking a part in this great Work, were in existence in 1787, the Author shows the providential manner in which all these Classes, hitherto unknown to each other, were joined in that Year; and how the Committee

was formed out of these in London, which was known afterwards as the Committee of the Society formed for the Abolition of the Slave-Trade.

From this time the Author states the Progress of the Cause under two Heads—the Labours of the newly-formed Committee, and his own as an Individual, till the End of the Year 1787. The first comprehends the various Measures taken by the Committee during this Period; their different Publications; their Correspondence with Men of Eminence and others both in England and in Foreign Parts, and the Result of them in the great Spread of the Cause. The Second comprehends the Contents of the Journal of the Author during his residence at Bristol and Liverpool; the Objects of his Inquiry; his Discoveries; his painful Feelings; his great Difficulties on many Occasions; and, finally, his Return, after many interesting Anecdotes, to the Committee in London.

The Author carries the next Period to the End of the Session of Parliament 1788. He continues his Account of the Labours of the Committee in all the Departments before mentioned. He describes the beginning of the People's attention to this Subject, the Spirit which was awakened; the Petitions to Parliament which followed; the Inquiry of the Privy Council into the Evil complained of; the Examinations which took place in consequence; the Communications of the Right Honourable William Pitt with the Committee; his Introduction of the Question into the Commons; the Examinations there; the melancholy Facts which came out; the Debate which took place upon them; the subsequent Introduction of Sir William Dolben's Bill into the same House, in order to alleviate the Horrors of the Middle Passage; the Debate that followed; its Introduction into the Lords; the Debate upon it there also; and, finally, the Passing of the same, and the End of the Session. Hence the First Volume gives the History of the Rise and Progress of the Abolition from the Year 1660 to the Summer of 1788. The Second will continue this History till the final Accomplishment of it in 1807.

As Books of History and Biography generally please young Persons, and may be made very instructive to them, it is to be hoped that this History may be both entertaining and useful to the Youth of the present age, and confirm all in an abhorrence of the evil contemplated in it. It will have a tendency, as a worthy friend* has remarked, who has read the Manuscript, to awaken our best feelings, to stimulate us to virtuous exertion; and, while it is a faithful record of the important circumstances that produced the great event of the Abolition of the Slave-Trade, it will be an instructive monument of the procedure of Divine Providence.

The price of the whole Work will be One Guinea.

* * * The Names of Subscribers to be sent to T. CLARKSON, at WILLIAM ALLEN'S, Plough-court, Lombard-street, by September 25; of whom may be had any Number of this Prospectus.

* Lindley Murray.

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