effectually kept up without new importations ; and that, indeed, such importation was in itself not only injurious to the real interests of the planters, but eventually pregnant with ruin to the West India Islands as British dependen­cies. These topics, with others appealing more directly to moral principle and humane feeling, had already been treat­ed in various publications, and they were now anxiously disseminated through the whole of Britain in pamphlets, newspaper articles and personal communications ; while the indefatigable Clarkson travelled everywhere collecting information as to the state of the slave trade.

An excitement was produced which enforced the atten­tion of the government ; and its results were still farther aided by the circumstance that Mr. Pitt, who was the inti­mate friend and political chief of Wilberforce, had already examined the question, and privately declared himself fa­vourable to the views of the society. In February 1788, an order of the crown directed that a committee of the Privy Council should inquire into the state of the slave trade, and its consequences both to Africa, to the colonies, and to the general trade of the kingdom. Before the end of that season, there lay on the table of the House of Com­mons one hundred and three numerously signed petitions, praying for the abolition of the traffic in human life.

Mr. Wilberforce’s ill health detaining him in the coun­try, Mr. Pitt, on the 9th of May 1788, declining to state his own opinion, moved a resolution that the House would, early in the next Session, take into consideration the cir­cumstances of the slave trade complained of in the peti­tions. This, excepting a motion made by David Hartley some years before, against slavery in the abstract, was the first time the subject had ever been mentioned in the Bri­tish Legislature. The prayer of the petitions was warmly supported, and delay opposed by Mr. Fox, Mr. Burke, and others. In the meantime, a bill was introduced by Sir William Dolben, and carried through both Houses after virulent opposition, for regιdating the burden of the slave­ships, and otherwise diminishing the horrors of the Middle Passage, as it was called, between Africa and the West In­dian islands. .

On the 12th of May 1789,Wilberforce made his first speech in the House upon the subject, introducing twelve resolu­tions deduced from the evidence which had been taken be­fore the Privy Council. The propositions, all condemna­tory of the trade, were supported by Burke, by Fox, by Granville, and by Pitt, who now declared his opinion un­alterable ; but the opponents gained their end of delay, by obtaining an order for hearing evidence. It was not till the spring of 1791, that Wilberforce was able to move for leave to bring in a bill, for preventing the further importa­tion of slaves into the colonies in the West Indies. After a stormy debate, the motion was lost by 88 to 163. The enthusiasm of the people, and the favourable dispositions of the legislature, had alike cooled ; insurrections of the ne­groes had broken out in Dominica, the leaders of the French revolution had corresponded with some members of the society, Clarkson had not only visited France, but was the friend of Brissot ; and every means had been used for pre­possessing the public against the abolitionists.

But the defeated party bated “ no jot of hope ;” and the public mind became calmer. In April 1792 the House ofCom- mons received from England 330 petitions, and from Scot­land 187 ; and Wilberforce moved an opinion of the House that the slave trade ought to be abolished. He was met by one of the most dangerous enemies of the measure, Mr. Dundas, afterwards Lord Melville, under whose dexterous management an amendment for *gradual* abolition was car­ried by a large majority ; and a few days afterwards the House passed a resolution for abolishing the trade in 1796; but in the House of Lords even this tardy justice was frustrated by a resolution to hear further evidence.

In 1793 the House of Commons refused to repeat their resolution of the previous year : in 1795, and each of the four following years, the motion for abolition was made and lost ; and the abolitionists then resolved to wait for better times. And thus a measure, calculated to wipe off in part a foul disgrace from the nation,—a measure supported by men of all parties and of all sects,—a measure openly and encouragingly advocated, not only by all the men of highest talent in the country, but by the minister of the day him­self, was defeated, after a struggle which, at the time, was aptly called the battle of the pigmies against the giants. Of the sincerity of the other great promoters of the scheme, no doubt has been expressed ; but on Mr. Pitt’s sincerity there have been thrown very grave suspicions, which it is not possible entirely to dispel. For, although the charge of absolute duplicity is sufficiently rebutted, both by his un­bending character and by his admirable speeches on the ques­tion, it is unaccountable how he, the most peremptory of all rulers, should not, if he pleased, have forced to silence those subalterns, who trembled to oppose him in any plan but this. The proud son of Chatham loved truth and jus­tice not a little, but he loved power and place greatly more ; and he was resolved that negro emancipation should not lose him either a shred of political influence, or a beam of royal favour.

But the triumph was already at hand. The excitement of the war, indeed, still for a time diverted public atten­tion ; and, though the principles which had been so con­vincingly promulgated were silently making converts every­where, nothing of importance took place for some years, except the appearance of a new and most able advocate in the person of Mr. Stephen, Wilberforce’s friend and bro­ther-in-law. In 1804, however, the annual motion of Wil­berforce was renewed. The first reading of his Bill tor immediate abolition was carried by 124 to 49, the majority containing all the Irish members ; and the votes for the third reading were 99 to 33. On the second reading of the Bill in the House of Lords, it was adjourned, without a division, till the following session. In that session, (the spring of 1805,) a new Abolition Bill was thrown out by the House of Commons on the second reading ; but, in the same year, a measure of Pitt’s for abolishing, by an Order in Council, the slave trade in the newly conquered colo­nies, which had no charters, was carried into effect without the smallest resistance.

The next two years were to witness the final victory. Pitt died ; and the ministry of Fox and Lord Grenville was formed. In June 1806, resolutions proposed by the new ministers, pledging the House of Commons to abolition “ with all practicable expedition,” were carried by more than 100 to 41 ; and an address to the king, for ob­taining the co-operation of foreign powers, was adopted without a division. A bill, founded on the resolutions, was successful in both Houses, and received the royal as­sent on the 25th of March 1807.

The great measure of the British legislature was imitat ed, in the first instance, by the United States, who were next followed successively by the new South American Republics of Venezuela, Chili, and Buenos Ayres, by Swe­den and Denmark, Holland and France. But Spain was brought no farther than to promise in 1814 that she would abolish the slave trade in eight years ; while Portugal in 1815 abolished to the north of the equator, promising to abolish finally eight years afterwards, and receiving a sum of money as the price of her acquiescence.

In the meantime, the abolitionists in England soon had the disappointment to discover, that the law bad no sanc­tion sufficient for enforcing its provisions ; whilst the fact, that the horrible trade must now, if conducted at all, be carried on as an act of smuggling, augmented all its miser­ies, and introduced atrocities not less shocking than those