

**AN ESSAY ON THE
IMPOLICY OF THE
AFRICAN SLAVE
TRADE: IN TWO PARTS**

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An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave Trade: In Two Parts by T. Clarkson

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AN
E S S A Y
ON THE
I M P O L I C Y
OF THE
AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE.

IN TWO PARTS.

THE SECOND EDITION.

BY

The Rev. T. CLARKSON, M. A.

L O N D O N :

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MDCCLXXXVIII.



TO
WILLIAM WILBERFORCE Esq.
ONE OF THE
MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT
FOR THE
COUNTY OF YORK.

S I R,

TO a Gentleman, like you, whose publick and private actions are founded on principle, and who are content with doing your duty without the tribute of popular applause, I fear that the perusal of this page may be rather distressing: nor am I sure that I shall not, in some degree, incur your censure, for having printed it without either your permission or your knowledge. You will consider, however, how difficult it is for me, who am acquainted with your exertions in the cause of humanity and freedom, to pass them over on such an occasion as this. I trust, therefore, that in addressing this little book to you, as a zealous advocate in behalf of the oppressed

(iv)

Africans, you will excuse the liberty I have taken, under the circumstance now explained; and I must intreat you to believe, that no encomium should ever have been paid you by me, unless I had believed it to have been previously earned.

I have the Honour to be, Sir,

Your sincere,

And obedient Servant,

THOMAS CLARKSON.

PREFACE.

P R E F A C E.

IT may be expected, that, in offering so many articles of information to the publick, and such as will materially affect the policy of the slave trade, something should be said of their authenticity, or the assurance the publick may have, that they are true:

The productions of Africa are the first objects of consideration in this work. Whatever I have said relative to the existence of these, has been collected from *living* evidence, and of the greatest part of them I have now specimens in my possession.

The cruelties, practised by the officers of slave vessels on the persons of their unfortunate crews, (which is another object of consideration) has been stated from various *depositions*, voluntarily made last year. I have had also *ocular demonstration*, as far as a sight of their mangled bodies will be admitted as a proof, that such cruelties were exercised upon them; and I have had the satisfaction of making some of the perpetrators *acknowledge* them, by the payment of a fine.

The loss of seamen, both in the slave trade and other trades, (which is a principal object of consideration in this work) is so exact, that, though it was necessary to have an account of no less than *seven or eight thousand* of them to ascertain the fact, yet the name of every individual can be given.

The list of plantations, that have been cited as having supported themselves independently of the slave trade, has been made up either from letters lately received on the subject, or from the oral statement of the proprietors themselves, or from those gentlemen who became acquainted with their situation by living near them.

With respect to other statements, which I may distinguish by the name of miscellaneous, they are of equal authority. I have always gone for them myself to the fountain head; and, with the assistance of my worthy associates in the cause, neither labour nor expense has been spared in obtaining them from that quarter.

Having said a few words on the authenticity of the pages now to be offered to the publick, I shall only add, that I shall think myself sufficiently repaid for any trouble I have taken, if they tend to throw any light on the subject; and to convince mankind, that Providence has universally made the scale to preponderate in favour of humanity; or that the African slave trade has not that *sound policy* for its basis, which people have but too generally imagined.

P A R T I.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

IN a former Essay, on the "Commerce of the Human Species," I particularly enlarged on the Injustice and Inhumanity of that, which is exhibited in the African trade. In the present, I shall undertake to shew (unless I deceive myself greatly) that it is as *impolitick*, as I have proved it to be inhuman and unjust.

There are many general arguments that must occur to every sensible and disinterested man who is at all acquainted with the subject, against this commerce, independently of its iniquity or its barbarous effects.

The first connection, which the Europeans ever had with the Africans, was for *Slaves*. This continued to be for many years the only traffick for which they had intercourse with each other. Some British merchants, however, finding by the reports of their agents, who had visited this coast, that it abounded with gums, wax, ambergris, honey, ivory, and gold, held out to the natives the prospect of a new and additional trade. The Africans were no sooner made acquainted with, than they embraced the plan. They began to collect the different articles accordingly, and have continued in the pursuit of them, though not without hazard to their persons, to the present day.

The commercial connection between the Europeans and Africans became by these means more extensive than before, and continued on this scale, till it was discovered that the same continent abounded with many valuable woods.

The merchants of that day, apprized of the discovery, immediately proposed their schemes as their predecessors