



Bodleian Libraries

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

This book is part of the collection held by the Bodleian Libraries and scanned by Google, Inc. for the Google Books Library Project.

For more information see:


<http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dbooks>



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 2.0 UK: England & Wales (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0) licence.

Inscribed to her Majesty, the Queen.

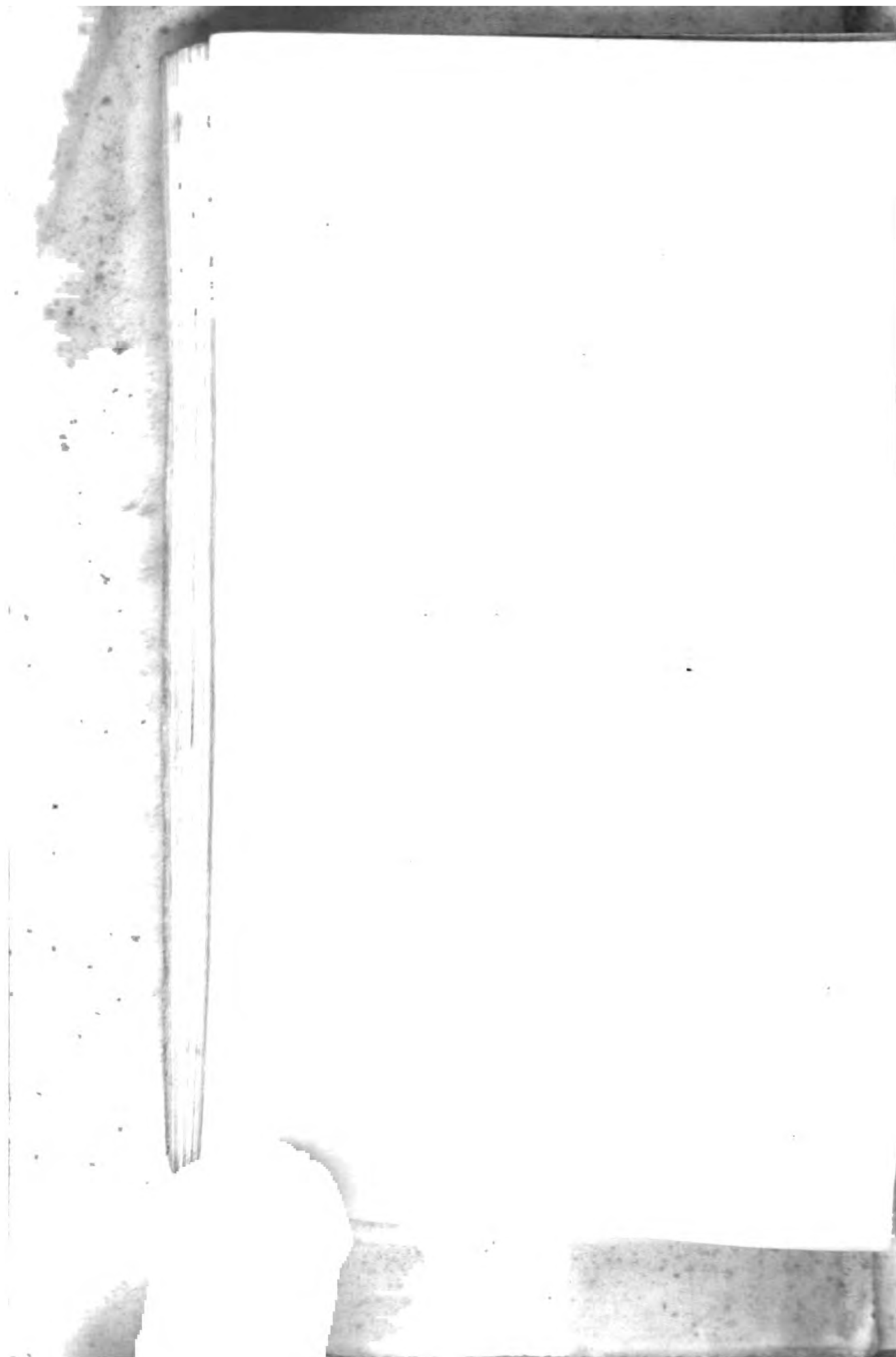
AN ADDRESS
TO
BRITISH FEMALES
OF EVERY
RANK AND STATION,
ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF
CLIMBING BOYS
IN
SWEEPING CHIMNIES.
BY SAMUEL ROBERTS.



'That it may please Thee to defend and to provide for the fatherless children
and widows, and all that are desolate and oppressed.'---LITANY.

SHEFFIELD:
PRINTED BY A. WHITAKER & Co., IRIS OFFICE, 13, FARGATE.
1834.

15.



**TO THE QUEEN'S
MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY,**

AS THE

**HIGHEST IN RANK, AND THE MOST INFLUENTIAL IN
EXAMPLE OF HER SEX IN THE REALM,**

THIS HUMBLE PLEA,

**IN BEHALF OF NO SMALL NUMBER OF THOSE WHO
ARE NATURALLY THE GREATEST OBJECTS OF**

FEMALE SYMPATHY,

NAMELY,

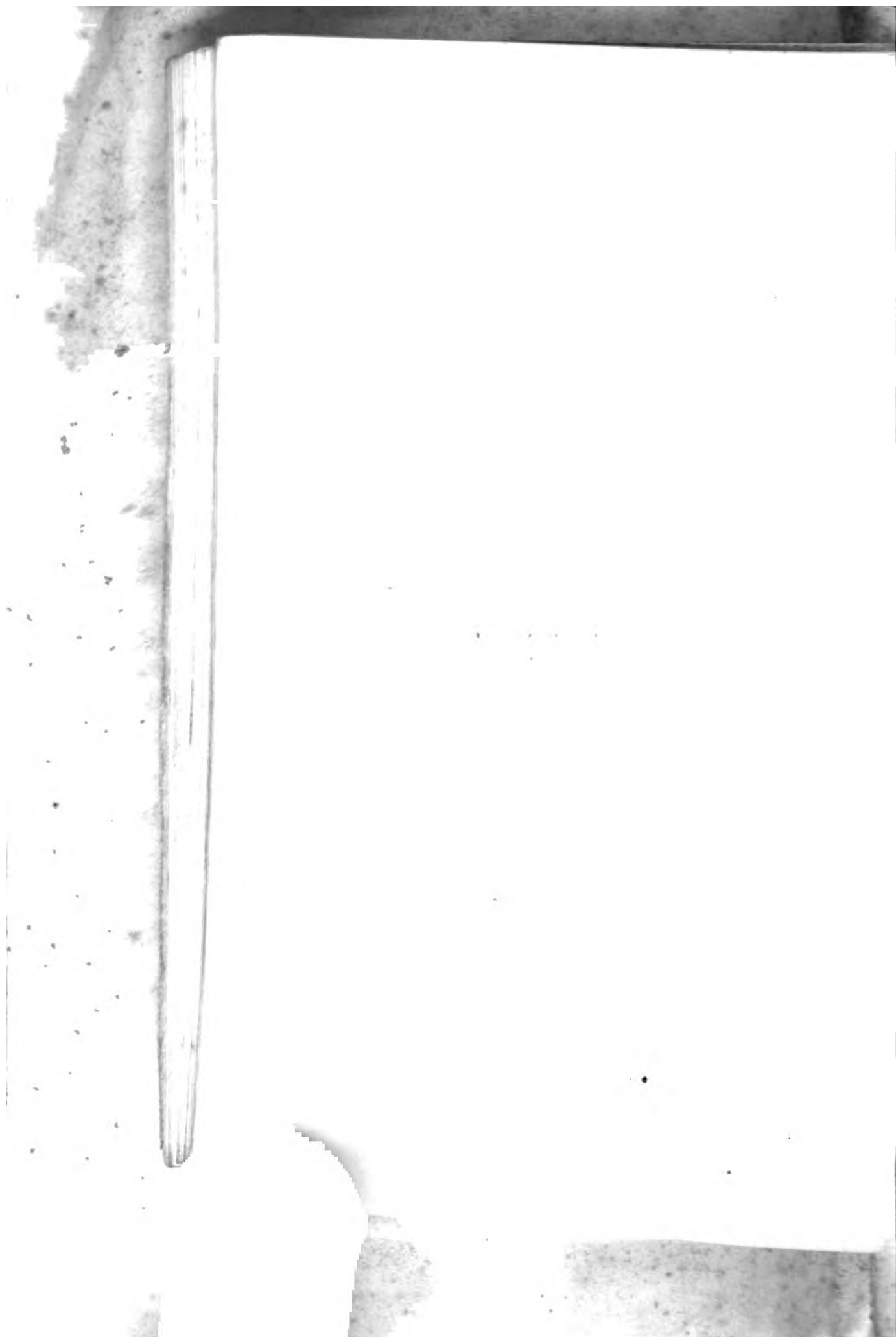
WRONGED AND SUFFERING CHILDREN,

IS, MOST RESPECTFULLY, INSCRIBED

**BY HER MAJESTY'S MOST DUTIFUL AND LOYAL
SERVANT AND SUBJECT,**

SAMUEL ROBERTS.

**Park Grange,
Sheffield, April 9, 1834.**



AN ADDRESS,

&c. &c.

THERE is scarcely any species of wickedness more frequently and forcibly denounced in the Holy Scriptures than that of oppression, and especially that of the *poor* and *needy*. Of all beings, of the latter description, *infant children* have, in every respect, the strongest claim on our commiseration, protection, and assistance. If poor, helpless, friendless, oppressed children have the strongest claim of all other beings on general succour, they have so, in an especial manner, on that of the *female* part of the community. There is a bond of union between them which nothing ought ever to break. Of all beings brought into the world, a human child is the longest in being able to provide for itself, and therefore the affection of adult females is there the longest requisite. The woman that can oppress, or witness the oppression of, a child with indifference, is unworthy of her distinguished station. To that sex, then, it is disgraceful that this appeal should be at all called for. Let them not say that *they* could not remedy the evil. I should at once deny the assertion, because they have not ever yet done their best. Let them do *that*, and I would dare to insure them success.

No body of Christians, since the promulgation of Christianity, ever sincerely, strenuously, and fervently, united to put away one acknowledged

sin who did not finally succeed in their endeavours. Even should the measure formerly have appeared to have been utterly *impossible*, they never need to have despaired; at any rate, they are *now* left without the shadow of an excuse for so doing. If they were now to make such an assertion, the *Abolition of Slavery* would at once refute it. What is to render the abolition of the use of CLIMBING BOYS *impossible*? Do the Master Sweeps possess such a preponderating power in the two Houses of Parliament, that they can alarm and overawe the ministers? Have *they* possessed something more strong than parliamentary sanctions, during two hundred years, on which to ground an indefeasible right to purchase, oppress, and destroy, the helpless infants of this favoured land in which a slave cannot exist? Can *they* assert that *their* calling pours the "*price of blood*" by millions into the national treasury? Can *they* threaten the government here that the withholding of their right to oppress would let loose the fiercest dogs of war—(those who were rendered savage by oppression)—to desolate, and lay waste, the fairest and richest of British colonies? Can *they* talk of the ruin of the British navy, and the withdrawing allegiance from their mother country? No! not one of these dreadful consequences can the Master Sweeps—powerful as they are—threaten, as the result of manumitting *their* bond-slaves. All these alarming results, and many others, did the slaveholders, unblushingly, threaten as the inevitable result of the abolition of slavery. Yet was it nevertheless abolished, and not one of these dire consequences has resulted.

What then stands in the way of the abolition of Climbing Boys? Will it require a greater sacrifice of property on the part of the people to accom-

plish it than the other did? *Twenty millions of money* have been the sacrifice offered on the altar of humanity, justice, and religion, to accomplish the former object, while twenty farthings will scarcely be required here. No wonder that the abolition of the first should, on almost all hands, have been declared to be *impossible*, and yet, even that was abolished. But to talk of impossibilities in this case, is to talk nonsense; I should like to see a supposed estimate made out by the sufferers, that are to be, of *their* expected losses. I think that you, ladies, would find no difficulty in collecting as much money as would fully satisfy all their just demands. In fact, the expense of a few pounds, in altering some flues in large houses, would be the most of what would be required. If, however, it were to be a thousand times more, it ought to be no obstacle to the putting away from us this *horrible sin of infant oppression*.

I do not hesitate to say, that in proportion to the number of the sufferers, this practice is even more cruel, and unjust, than West Indian Slavery itself. These objects are *all* young and helpless. Their employment is ten-fold more horrible than that of any attaching to the slaves. They are as much in the power of tyranny. A far greater number of them are crippled, and rendered deformed for life. A far greater proportion of them die in consequence of hard usage, while the horrible deaths from suffocation, burning, and other accidents, are in this case beyond measure more numerous. And all this is at *home*, within our knowledge, before our eyes, in our streets, nay, in our very houses.

During the last twenty years, the feelings of many of you have been horrified with the frequent accounts of the inhuman treatment of ne-

groes in the West India Islands, often by females, some of them being in the higher ranks in society there, nay you may have read works published by *females*, vindicating proceedings such as these, and these things served to arouse your determination that if you could prevent it—Slavery should be no longer. Nay, at this very time, you are probably reading accounts, which are almost daily appearing from, and of, the *Slave States of North America*, (that declared land of *equal rights* and *universal freedom*,) respecting the treatment of Negroes there. I dare say that every feeling of propriety, delicacy, and humanity, have been painfully aroused in you by those revolting statements of facts, and you have scarcely been able to bear the humiliating conviction that you were of the same species, and sex, as the inflictors of such cruelty. If I had been compelled to be an advocate for such erring females, I should have urged, as the only terrible excuse, that they had long—(perhaps always)—been accustomed to witness such dreadful proceedings, and that therefore, they had ceased to be considered by them as either unjust or cruel. You however, I dare say, would not be willing to admit this as any thing like a justifying excuse. What then will you say, when I shall bring more than this guilt of the females of the western hemisphere home to you? This however—strange and painful as it may be—I must do.

There is a race of human beings in this country (the Chimney Sweepers' Climbing Boys, before alluded to) which in many respects, as before stated, is more oppressed than the negroes in either the West India Islands, or in North America. I would almost venture to say that it is impossible for any human beings to be more so—because if they were, the sufferings of almost all of them

must very soon terminate in death. How many of these poor infants, give me leave to ask, arrive at years of maturity? If many, what becomes of them? of those who die young, who knows (or cares) anything about them? The death of any of your favourite dogs would be more lamented. A great part of them are *sold* and abandoned by their dissolute fathers, to this dreadful, disease, and death-dealing trade. You would shrink appalled from the idea of infanticide—but infanticide would be tender mercy to this selling of them to be passed through the fiery-flues to Moloch. Look at the frontispiece to this feeble advocacy; two of these poor innocent infant sufferers taken at once both dead out of one chimney, martyrs to this accursed practice! a Christian jury pronouncing it “AC-CIDENTAL DEATH.”

Two victims together, is an uncommon case—single violent deaths from the effects of the trade are far from being so. I know that *some of you* will say “don’t repeat them—we are sick of hearing of them!” The West India females were, and North American females are, sick of *hearing* of the cruelties exercised on the negro slaves, and therefore, they heard their cries, but they would not help them, for they had heard them so long and so often that they had ceased to regard them. So it is with you—you have heard so often, and so long, of the helpless, friendless Climbing Boys being forced up chimnies by goads and flames—of their being scarified, bruised, flogged and crippled—of their having their nails torn off—their eyes inflamed—their growth stunted, and their limbs distorted—of their sufferings and death from their cureless cancers—of their being suffocated, baked, burnt, and scalded to death—of their being dashed to pieces in pots falling from the tops of the

highest chimnies—and dying from disease and want and misery by the highway side, that you have ceased to think much of it. You have heard them so long, and so often, screaming in the streets through the live-long day—and from the rocking chimney tops, long before the *dawning of the day*—in tones resembling the agonising cries of some poor animal with the butcher's knife at its throat, that you have ceased to regard them.

You have seen these poor children so often like moving bundles of the filthiest rags, without the semblance of the human form divine—that, though they frighten children, horses, and dogs, *you* pass them unregarded. Yet of such, your Saviour assured you, is the Kingdom of Heaven. Do you really believe—give me leave to ask—that the rudest, the most uncivilized savages, that ever existed, ever treated their helpless offspring, whom they permitted to live, in so horribly brutal a manner as this? I believe that the history of the world does not afford an instance of the kind. When your Blessed Saviour was on earth, he opened his heart, and his arms, to the children of the poor, and if you mean to profit by HIS life and death, *you* must imitate his example. Are you then doing so towards these miserably oppressed children?

Your Saviour told you in all cases to do to others as you would have others do to you. Are you doing so in this instance? Would you think it right—if you have children—that they should be so treated? If not, then are ye obeying neither the precepts nor the example of Him, on obedience to whom you profess to admit your eternal salvation to depend. In that case, the plea that you had become so familiarized to the system of oppression, that you never thought of

it—will avail you nothing. This plea you allow to neither the West India, nor North American females—nor will it be allowed to you.

I am aware that many of you will say that starved and famished, and ragged and filthy, and frightful and crippled, and deformed and blear-eyed, and wounded as these children are, they are not in reality *so* miserable, as many may imagine. That you have seen them playing, gambling, and even laughing, when they were assembled together, and that many of them, when questioned, say, that they like to be Sweeps. Now admit all this, and what does it prove but that God is more merciful than you are? You dispense to them every thing that can afflict poor young human creatures, without affording them one counteracting comfort. God made them entitled, as much as yourselves to every blessing that you enjoy, and He, moreover, implanted in them an elasticity, and buoyancy of animal spirits, at times more than a match for the accumulation of afflictions which *you* heap upon them. If anything could add to the horribleness of their condition, it is that, having known nothing better, they are contented even in that;—where is the female breast that can remain unmoved on regarding one of those wretched beings, and hearing such a declaration? Where in the world is the object of misery to whom *God* has denied every gleam of hope and gladness? *Man alone* dispenses *unalloyed* misery, and the misery that he dispenses to these poor children, is a misery continuing in its consequences throughout life.

It is a fact that the *Child* is in a great measure the father of the *Man*. Reflect then, that as you form the child from seven to fourteen years of age, you form the man through life, and in all probabi-

lity the *immortal being*, after death. It is then, *at your peril*, that you shall abuse that power.

I will not ask you who are in affluence, and *mothers*, what you would feel were you compelled to witness a darling boy of your own, forced by some black, frightful, unfeeling, tyrant, by scourge, or goad, or flame, to clamber up a darkened, dismal, sooty flue. The bare idea is too horrible. But I may ask what would be your feelings, and your exclamations, were the frightful being, in your presence, to seize your *favourite petted dog*, and by these coercive means, compel *him* to the terrible ascent? Would you restrain your intreaties, your tears, and your efforts to deliver? Would not your cries, and your lamentations without, be as loud, and as continuous, as those of your suffering favourite within the chimney? And yet, you know that every child who learns the trade has something of this to undergo at first, and something as bad through life; often indeed a short and miserable life.

I have not thought it necessary to describe the almost innumerable instances of torture and death which have been publicly *known* to attend this horribly revolting trade, nor did I mean to have recorded even *one*, but while I have been writing, the following dreadful, but too common case—has been just put into my hands:—“Jan. 12th, 1834, Belfast.—Last week, one of those melancholy cases occurred in this town which have, unfortunately, *been so common* in the history of *Chimney Sweeping*. A LITTLE BOY had ascended a chimney while the fire was not removed from the grate below, but merely covered over with a *gridle*,*

* A sort of iron plate.

which it was supposed would be a sufficient protection to the poor child. The soot fell down in great quantities on the gridle, and in a little time, it ignited. In spite of every effort to prevent it, it communicated to the soot in the chimney, *which was soon in one mass of burning flames, while the poor child was pent up in the middle of it.* After a considerable time he succeeded in getting down, but when he did so, he was in a most frightful condition, *the flesh being literally roasted on his bones,* though he was still living. He was speedily conveyed to the hospital, where he remained for some time in a state of excruciating suffering—and *there died!*"

There gentle, tender hearted *ladies!* look there? Look there, on that *murdered LITTLE BOY,* and see what you have done! But this is only one out of hundreds! This roasting of the flesh on the bones of innocent living *little children* has been sanctioned by the *females* of these kingdoms during more than a hundred years. Formerly there existed no necessity for the commission of such a *sin,* nor does there, as I know by experience, any such necessity exist *now.* My own chimnies have been swept by my own servants with a brush and ball from the top during many years with scarcely either trouble, inconvenience, danger, or dirt. Indeed *there never can exist in any case a NECESSITY for committing sin!*

There is not, I apprehend, one of you who will hesitate to affirm, that a practice which produces such results, as the one which has just occurred at Belfast, must be *SINFUL.* You will not, any of you, I conceive, *now* assert, that any modification of *sin* is to be allowed. It must be relinquished, *totally,* and *immediately.* That you, ladies, are generally tender-hearted, I can readily admit—so

were many of the West India planters, men perhaps (generally speaking) of humanity, but long experience proved that the abolition of slavery was not to be confided to them; neither is the abolition of this vile practice, (as the last twenty years has proved) to be confided to you.

During almost that period the KING of Great Britain has been at the head of a society for its abolition, and yet *you*, the sisters, the mothers, and the grandmothers of such children as those who become the victims of it, continue to sanction it. *PARLIAMENT must abolish it!* There is no other way of doing any effectual good in it. *Female petitions* are now received in Parliament. Let the *females*, then, from every town, petition Parliament immediately. It is a cause that more especially belongs to them. This is no political subject. The Queen herself, I have no doubt, will willingly and zealously sanction so good and so holy a cause. But you must not rest in female societies, and female petitions, you must exert your irresistible influence with your fathers, your husbands, your children, and your lovers. Do not let them rest till they embark heartily in the cause—do all this, and I shall have little fear of speedy and effectual success. If you do not do this, I do not know whether I should not call upon you to imitate the example of the determined gentlemen advocates of the abolition of slavery, and, as deputed delegates from all the large towns, assemble by three or four hundred together in the Egyptian Hall, and from thence proceed to Downing-street, to tell the Ministers that *for once* you were determined to have your will. I wonder where the minister can be found who would in such a case dare to say you, NO!

It must be recollected by you, that throughout

the whole of this address I have been speaking to British females as a collective body. As such, cruel inattention to the sufferings of the poor Climbing Boys, has been most disgracefully conspicuous. But these remarks will in no wise apply to the hundreds and thousands of highly respectable females who, in various parts of the country, have for many years been vainly exerting themselves to mend an evil which can only be effectually lessened by being totally abolished. But mistake me not. So far am I from thinking that *British* females are in *any respect* inferior to the females of any other country in the world, that I do most firmly believe that they (as a body) not only exceed all other *females* in every excellency, but that in all that is requisite to constitute the true *Christian*, they stand pre-eminent among the *human race*. Do not then forget that the practice is in its very nature *sinful*, on that ground it must be attacked, and on that ground *no modification* will do.

I must remind you that William Tooke, Esq. M.P., who was, I believe, treasurer to the Society for Suppressing Climbing Boys from its first establishment, gave notice, near the conclusion of the last Session, in the House of Commons, that he intended, early in the ensuing one, to move for an Act of Parliament to abolish the practice.* You will see then how necessary it is that he should be strongly supported by the country, else a low lordly jest may throw it out, as a low lordly jest hath once before done. It will be recollected that about fifteen years ago after a very long and strict investigation before a Committee of the House of Commons, a bill for the Suppression of Climbing Boys was passed by a great majority. It was sent

* The bill has since been brought in, read a second time, and an early day will be fixed for the second reading.

up to the House of Lords, and passed at two readings there—on the third reading, before its being put to the vote, a noble, now aged, lord stood up, and before the august assembly of peers, both spiritual and temporal, ridiculed the burning of these poor infants to death, humourously comparing them in their purging operations to *calomel*, to *ducks*, and to *geese*. This jest, at the last, was irresistible, and the bill was lost by three votes. How many poor innocent children have since been burnt to death in consequence of his lordship's pleasant jokes I cannot tell. I dare say that the possibility of any child dear to his lordship being burnt never occurred to him. It was, however, a little remarkable, that not very long after, a grandson of his lordship actually was burnt to death. You, ladies, are not, any more than his facetious lordship, out of the reach of such affliction, and whether you should consider these in the light of instances of retributive justice or not, their occurrence would certainly add to the poignancy of your regret. I shall conclude with the following extract from a recent talented publication entitled "*The Doctor*:"—

"Of what use a story may be even in the most serious debates may be seen from the circulation of old Joes in Parliament, which are as current there as their sterling namesakes used to be in the city some threescore years ago. A jest, though it should be as stale as last week's newspaper, and as flat as Lord Flounder's face, is sure to be received with laughter by the Collective Wisdom of the Nation; nay it is sometimes thrown out like a tub to the whale, or like a trail of carrion to draw off hounds from the scent.

"The Bill which should have put an end to the inhuman practice of employing children to sweep chimneys, was thrown out on the third reading in the House of Lords

(having passed the Commons without a dissentient voice) by a speech from Lord Lauderdale, the force of which consisted in, literally, a Joe Miller jest. He related that an Irishman used to sweep his chimney by letting a rope down, which was fastened round the legs of a goose, and then pulling the goose after it. A neighbour to whom he recommended this as a convenient mode objected to it on the score of cruelty to the goose: on which he replied that a couple of ducks might do as well. Now if the Bill before the house had been to enact that men should no longer sweep chimneys, but that boys should be used instead, the story would have been applicable. It was no otherwise applicable than as it related to chimney sweeping: but it was a joke and that sufficed. The Lords laughed; his Lordship had the satisfaction of throwing out the Bill, and the home Negro trade has continued from that time, now seven years, till this day, and still continues. His Lordship had his jest, and it is speaking within compass to say, that, in the course of those seven years, two thousand children have been *sacrificed* in consequence.

“The worst actions of Lord Lauderdale’s worst ancestor admit of a better defence before God and man.

“Had his Lordship perused the evidence which had been laid before the House of Commons when the bill was brought in, upon which evidence the Bill was founded? Was he aware of the shocking barbarities connected with the trade, and inseparable from it? Did he know that children inevitably lacerate themselves in learning this dreadful occupation? that they are frequently crippled by it; frequently lose their lives in it by suffocation, or by slow fire? that it induces a peculiar and dreadful disease? that they who survive the accumulated hardships of a childhood during which they are exposed to every kind of misery, and destitute of every kind of comfort, have at the age of seventeen or eighteen to seek their living how they can in some other employment.—for it is only by children that this can be carried on? Did his Lordship know that girls instead of boys are thus abused? that

their sufferings begin at the age of six, sometimes a year earlier? finally that they are sold to this worst and most inhuman of all slaveries, and sometimes stolen for the purpose of being sold to it?

“ I bear no ill-will towards Lord Lauderdale, either personally or politically : far from it. But I will tell his Lordship that rather than have spoken as he did against an act which would have lessened the sum of wickedness and suffering in this country,—rather than have treated a question of pure humanity with contempt and ridicule,—rather than have employed my tongue for such a purpose and with such success, I would———But no : I will not tell him what I had added in the sincerity of a free tongue and an honest heart. I leave the sentence imperfect rather than that any irritation which the strength of my language might excite should lessen the salutary effects of self condemnation.



PITY POOR SWEEP.