

ers and tugs, and above 9,000 sailing boats of various kinds, from the yacht-like *cangias* or *dahabeeyahs* to the ponderous cargo-carrying *maashes* or cock-boat *sandals*. They are nearly all fine muscular men, inured to severe labour in rowing, poling, or towing, and are withal perhaps the merriest of the Egyptian working classes. They mostly belong to the river-side villages, and in spite of the still not uncommon device of sacrificing an eye—where ophthalmia has not already done it—to avoid conscription, they mainly furnish the crews of the small navy and of the Khedivieh Company's steamers. In both they are now fairly well treated, and the service is much less dreaded and avoided than it was a few years ago.

If the level of native skilled labour in Egypt is thus generally low, it is at least quite up to the wants of the great mass of the population. A vast advance must be made in both the social and material civilisation of the country before a much higher class of work, or more of it, will be required for home consumption; while as regards manufactures for export, the chance of Egypt competing successfully with Europe is still less now than it was fifty years ago. Sugar-making is perhaps the sole exception, and the foundations of that industry have been laid at a cost which no mere private enterprise could afford. From an æsthetic point of view the loss of the art which built Karnak, or of the later and more delicate skill that reared the old Cairene mosques, may be lamented; but the economist and the politician will not greatly regret either, nor the general backwardness in humbler crafts, if agriculture—the oldest and still most important of Egyptian industries—be improved and encouraged as it is the common interest of both the people and the Government that it should

CHAPTER XV.

SLAVERY.

Popular Misconception on this Subject—Difference between Eastern and Western Slavery—Property in the Person almost the only Common Feature—Status of Slave better in Egypt than in Turkey—Universality of the Institution—Different Classes of Slaves—Circassians now Rare—Abyssinians and Soudanis—Egyptian Slaves protected by Religion and Public Sentiment—Additional Safeguards decreed by the Khedive—Their Abuse by the Consuls—Consequent Limitation of Consular Interference—Existing Facilities of Emancipation—The Slave Trade legally Abolished, but still surreptitiously carried on—How it is fed—Prices—The Institution now merely a Mild Domestic Servitude—Acknowledged Cruelties of Slave-hunting—The Khedive honestly bent on its Abolition—Colonel Gordon's Commission.

ON few topics connected with the East is Western opinion more at fault than on the subject of this chapter. Thanks mainly to the well-meant but totally misleading exaggerations of professional philanthropists, the popular notion of Turkish and Egyptian servitude has been formed from illustrations of the cruel and brutalising bondage established in our own colonies till within little more than forty years ago, which survived for thirty years later in the Southern United States, and which still exists in Cuba and Brazil.* But barring the owner's right of property in the slave, the two systems have hardly a feature in common; and even this the patriarchal manners and, on not a few points, the humaner legislation of the East have beset by limitations which distinguish it widely from the absolute title of the Cuban or American Le-

* The recent discussions in Parliament, and the appeals of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Societies to Lord Derby, amply exemplify the prevailing misconception on this subject.

gree. Many, too, regard slavery in the East as a purely Mohammedan institution, forgetting that it is older than Abraham, and ignorant that till within quite recent years it has been practised by Moslem and Christian alike. Under the less liberal laws and social customs of Turkey the right is no longer accorded to rayahs; but in Egypt the law makes no difference between Arab and Copt, and slaves are therefore still commonly owned by both. But in both Turkey and Egypt the condition of the slaves differs *toto cælo* from that of the old Roman *servus* and the modern West Indian and American negro. In the latter cases he was and is a mere chattel, subjected to every degrading hardship, and liable to be cruelly abused at will. In the Levant he is simply an unwaged in-door servant, whom both law and religion protect from ill-treatment, and who, as a rule, is not only as kindly used as ordinary domestics in Europe, but enjoys over them not a few advantages. Slavery is of course bad and indefensible under any conditions, but it is right that the vast difference between its Eastern and Western types should be understood.

In the absence of any official statistics on the point, no even approximate estimate of the number of the slave population in Egypt can be given. It must, however, be large, as nearly all the in-door work in every family above the poorest is done by servants of this class. From the house of the pettiest dealer or even better class mechanic, up to the palace of the Khedive, slave labour for this kind of work is the rule. And here one of the many important distinctions between Eastern and Western servitude is at once met with. In Egypt and Turkey domestic work only is done by slaves,* the cases being rare

* To this rule there are now in Egypt a few exceptions, in the case of village sheikhs, who, after the increase of wealth consequent on the develop-

in which they are employed even in stables or light gardening; while in the West their chief value has always been as field hands. So inwrought, indeed, is the institution into the domestic and social life of the country, that the possession of one or more slaves is as essential to "respectability" amongst one's neighbours as is that of a servant for menial work in a European family; and this social consideration has, probably, more to do with the maintenance of the institution than any question as to the relative cost of slave and free labour. The Koranic law on the subject being, of course, the same in Turkey as in Egypt, the condition of slaves in the two countries is in the main identical, but practically it is in many respects better in the latter. In Turkey slaves are, as a rule, kindly treated, and in instances not a few have risen to high office; but they are none the less made to feel that, so long as they remain slaves, their status is much below that of free men. In Egypt, on the contrary, the fact that for centuries a race of slaves—the Mamlouks—ruled the country, has long ago relieved bondage from the stigma of social degradation that attaches to it in the West, and has raised the relation between master and slave to one under which the latter, indeed, owes personal service to the former, but without, either in himself or others, any sense of ignominy involved in paying it. He is, in a word, rather the dependant than the slave of his owner, who treats him—far more than free servants—as a member of the family, and in cases innumerable gives him his liberty after a few years, and starts him on his way to any fortune, save the highest in the country—for between black and white, freedmen and free men,

ment of cotton culture during the American war, in a few instances bought slaves to help in field labour; but the work done by these is as light as that of the free fellah, and in respect of food and lodging they share the common fortune of their owner and his family

neither the law nor society makes any practical distinction.

Slaves in Egypt may be broadly divided into *white* and *black*, although the shades of colour between these two extremes are very numerous. To the one class belong the fair-skinned Circassian and the dusky but often beautiful Abyssinian; and to the other the darker but still straight-haired Galla and the negro from Nubia, Kordofan, or Darfour. The extinction of the Mamlouks, and the indiscriminate admission of Arabs and Copts alike to the public service, have practically put an end to the importation of white male slaves, who are now rarely or never met with as adults. Some few boys are occasionally purchased as playfellows for the sons of the wealthier Beys or Pashas, but in almost every instance as soon as they reach full age they are liberated, married off—frequently to their masters' daughters—and in some way established in life. In fact, the relation of this very limited class to their owners just falls short of adoption, which was formerly very common, but is less so now. The relatively great mortality among the children of white mothers who have themselves not been born in the country, contributes to maintain the demand for Circassian girls, the vast majority of whom, however, find not merely purchasers but husbands among the sons of the wealthier classes. It is now, indeed, rare that a full-grown white girl is kept in mere concubinage, as both her cost and her personal attractions give her a value that speedily—very often at once—raises her to the higher domestic rank. But the importation of these Caucasian luxuries has greatly fallen off since the cessation of the regular traffic between Constantinople and the coast of Abasia reduced the supply, and correspondingly raised the price of the smuggled article. Most of the few who now reach Egypt singly or in

couples, where thirty years ago they came in scores, belong to the Circassian colonies in Roumelia or Asia Minor, and the difficulties of even their import, under the eyes of jealous foreign Consuls, are such that the trade has virtually ceased. At any rate, it is only in the very wealthiest harems that these exotic beauties are now to be found. They are mostly bought at from ten to twelve years of age, and, after being well nurtured for three or four years, and taught the usual Eastern accomplishments, are, as a rule, either married by the master of the house or given as wives to his sons. In strict law marriage does not confer freedom, but the girl is nearly always first liberated, and the offspring are, in any case, born free. One especial reason why these white girls are thus almost always married is that they wear much longer than either native Egyptian ladies or Abyssinians, retaining their fine physique to thirty-five or even forty years of age, while the latter are generally withered and *passées* before five-and-twenty. This is an important consideration in view of the now prevailing fashion among the upper classes of having only one wife; but the much higher cost of these white beauties places them beyond the reach of all but the wealthiest, and except for these the harem market is now chiefly supplied with Abyssinians, who, at a fifth, or even eighth or tenth of the price, are in all but colour and wear physically equal to the best of their white rivals. Some of these copper-skinned houris are indeed very models of southern beauty—combining with a profusion of long wavy hair, lustrous eyes, regular and delicately cut features, perfectly curved busts, and admirably moulded limbs generally, a grace and even dignity of carriage that no artificial training could heighten. Many of the wives of the middle, and nearly all the concubines of the upper classes are taken

from this source of supply, as free Arab girls never enter harems in this latter capacity. There are also many Abyssinian male slaves, whose employment and treatment are similar to those of their white fellows, and who, once liberated, may, like the latter, rise to any attainable rank in the public service.

The other class of wholly black slaves is much more numerous, and is generally employed in lower kinds of domestic work than those just noticed.* They comprise specimens of every black race known to northern and central Africa, from the mixed Arabs and Abyssinians of Nubia, Berber, and Sennaar, to the pure negro of Darfour, and the yet other cross—neither negro nor Abyssinian—which forms the Galla tribes. These it is whose kidnaping and other means of obtainment in the remote interior, form the chief ground of complaint against slavery in Egypt. But once in the country, and absorbed into its service, their condition, it may be affirmed, becomes not merely an immense improvement on their past, but in all respects one of the lightest forms of servitude to which the name of slavery can be given. From every material point of view they are infinitely better off than the free-born fellahs, on whom, indeed, they look down with proud contempt as an inferior class—since, as before remarked, both law and religion combine to protect them, as neither protects the peasant. A bad master can, of course, ill-treat his slave as well as his free servant to the verge of cruelty, without coming within the clutches of the Cadi; but such cases are rare, as the social sentiment on the subject is essentially humane, and quite as operative as public opinion among ourselves. This is, of course, occasionally disregarded; and where that hap-

* But in families where both slaves and free servants are kept, the meanest work of all is done by the latter.

pens the law now supplies a ready and effective means of redress. Already the *shérial*, or old religious law, entitled an ill-used slave to insist on being sold to another master; but soon after his accession the Khedive extended this provision by ordering his full emancipation in every case of proved abuse. This humane decree was, however, evaded in practice by the masters meeting every complaint with a countercharge of theft or other criminal offence, which availed with the too conservative and not always incorruptible Cadi to secure a sentence of imprisonment, or other severe punishment, unless the slave consented to return to his owner. To remedy this failure of justice the Khedive then ordered that the foreign Consuls should have jurisdiction in such cases, and that on their demand the native authorities should issue the necessary certificates of manumission. This very liberal provision worked fairly well for a time, till the abolitionist zeal of some of our own agents abused it in the other direction, by liberating every slave who presented himself at the consulate with even the flimsiest grievance. Many hundreds were thus set free before the abuse culminated at Mansourah, where, in 1873, our consular agent (in rank not even a Vice-Consul) emancipated no fewer than 1,700 in a single month, and would soon have liberated the whole slave population of the province if the Cairo authorities, deferring to a general outcry among the heads of families, had not interfered. In the result, the Khedive indemnified the owners of the slaves thus incontinently released, and narrowed the liberating powers of the Consuls for the future to cases in which, after full inquiry, in concert with the native authorities, positive mal-treatment should be proved. The subjoined extract from a despatch addressed at the time by Nubar Pasha, himself a Christian, and then Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, to her