

Majesty's Agent and Consul-General embodies the views then, and there is reason to believe still, held by his Highness as to the extent to which this philanthropic interference between master and slave can, as yet, be fairly carried :

It was impossible for his Highness to issue orders, as seems to have been understood, that it was only necessary for a slave to present himself before the local authorities in order that these latter should be obliged to give him his papers of liberation. Such an order would have been simply arbitrary on his Highness's part, and would have led to a result exactly contrary to that which he proposes, by stimulating the public sentiment against measures calculated to arbitrarily injure private rights which have been legally acquired. This sentiment is all the more founded, since in the East, and especially in Egypt, religion and usage combine to correct, as far as possible, whatever is hard or cruel in the condition of the slave. The European Governments who have abolished slavery in their colonies, have, in the interests of justice, taken into full account the rights acquired by the owners, and it was only by the payment of large indemnities that they put an end to an institution which even their religion condemned. In the orders he had issued, therefore, his Highness could not ignore his duty to protect institutions which are in Egypt consecrated by both religion and custom. For this reason the orders he has always given were intended not to authorise the Government functionaries to set free all slaves asking for liberty, but only those who may have suffered cruel treatment from their masters—whether they complained of this in person or through some other channel. In such cases the local authorities are obliged to inquire into the truth of the complaint, and once the ill-treatment is proved freedom is given.

Foreign interference is now, therefore, exercised within these limits, which equitably meet all the fair wants of the situation ; since—besides the other ready means of obtaining his liberty which are afforded by volunteering into the army—with this right of appeal to her Majesty's

Consul at Alexandria, Cairo, Port Saïd, or Suez, every really ill-treated slave in Egypt holds

— in his own hand

The power to cancel his captivity.

Nor is it merely absence of cruelty and general humanity of treatment which both law and usage thus enforce. It happens so often as to have almost become the rule that, after a few years' faithful service, the slave is voluntarily liberated, and, if a man, established in some sort of business ; or, if a woman, married to an honest freeman, with whom a suitable dowry secures her ready acceptance and good treatment as a wife. Even where this is not done, slaves bought young (as most of them are) are seldom or never sold again, and in nine cases out of ten they are set free at their owner's death. A concubine, too, who bears a child to her master, not only cannot afterwards be sold, but is generally liberated, and often married by him after the birth, while the child is born free,* and the mother acquires the absolute right of freedom at his death.

The wide distinction which all this constitutes between Eastern and Western slavery results directly from the legislation on which the former is based. This is simply the old Mosaic law which Mohammed found in the Jewish Scripture, and adapted, with few or no material changes, to the new family life of Islam. At first, with Moslems as with Jews, slavery was maintained by the legitimate spoils of war, and in both cases it was only when these ceased that the institution was fed by the purchase of imported captives, found, the buyers were not curious to inquire how or where. In all times Africa has been the chief

* Except where the mother is the property of one of the master's wives, who has not consented to the concubinage. The child is then a slave, unless before its birth the mother has been sold or presented to the father.

field of supply, and there is no reason to suppose that the cruelties practised in obtaining the victims and bringing them to market—which form the chief, if not almost the only argument against the mild form of slavery at present existing in the Levant—are greater now than they were two, three, or four thousand years ago; when the traffic had the sanction first of patriarchal practice, and then of direct Levitical law. Looked at from the standpoint of our higher modern civilisation, it is now of course none the better for this; but as the scene of the institution is still the “unchanging East,” much of whose social life has been stereotyped for a hundred generations, these historical factors in the problem should not be forgotten.

Still, although the conditions of servitude in Egypt are thus comparatively easy, the death-rate among the black slaves especially is, and always has been, higher than in any other class of the population. In the old days of plague they were its first and most numerous victims, and they still suffer from pulmonary diseases to an extent unknown among natives and resident Europeans. Few black slaves, indeed, reach middle age, ten or a dozen years generally sufficing to sweep away a generation, at the end of which the whole have to be replaced. Black slave children, too, as well as white, born in the country, mostly die early, and consequently contribute little or nothing to maintain the class. In this double fact lies the vitality of the trade that recruits the service, in spite of its legal abolition some years ago. The most the Government has been able—or has perhaps desired—to do has been to abate the cruelties of the traffic within Egyptian territory, to prohibit—*i.e.*, minimise—the import of slaves by the Nile, and to close the public slave-markets in Cairo, Alexandria, Tanta, and other towns of the interior where, till within a few years ago, the trade was openly carried on.

To effect the first of these results the old *gazzuas*, or slave hunts, which even in Abbas Pasha's time were regularly organised by Government officers in Upper Nubia and the Soudan, have been put an end to, and kidnapping is now believed to be practised nowhere within the limits of established Egyptian authority, except in the southern districts of Sennaar and Kordofan, where the Khedive's firman is powerless to completely stamp out a traffic which has formed a staple industry in all these regions since history began. The chief sources of supply are now, therefore, the great oasis of Darfour, the Shilook country, and the districts south of it watered by the Bahr-el-Gazel, the Sobat, and the Upper White Nile, over most of which the authority of the Cairo Government is as yet only nominal, and powerless, consequently, to prevent the *razzias* which feed this cruelest of human traffics. After a long desert journey the caravans from Darfour strike the Nile either at Shendy or Dongola, according as they are intended for Souakim and the Hedjaz, or for Egypt proper. Those from the south-east embark at various points above Khartoum, and after voyaging down as far as Halfé or Shendy, cross the so-called desert of Bahiuda to Old Dongola, where they again take to the river. In the case of the whole the sufferings and consequent mortality of the victims before they reach the Nile are very great, and form, indeed the main argument against an institution which, however mild in its subsequent working, is condemned in advance by these antecedent horrors. But once within the jurisdiction of what may be called the Nile police, the condition of the captives becomes fairly tolerable. Even in these remote provinces the trade is nominally illegal, but the law is a dead letter, and the authorities directly control and profit by the traffic. Care is accordingly taken that the slaves are not unduly packed in the large *nog-*

gurs, or cargo-boats, which transport them down the river, and that they have a sufficiency of food and water. Below the First Cataract, however, the law becomes operative, and thence down to Cairo the importation is strictly contraband; but by this time the numbers have been greatly thinned by sales *en route*, and the small "parcels" that remain are easily enough smuggled into Boulak, or landed a few miles higher up. Very few, it may be here remarked, reach Cairo by way of the Red Sea, as nearly all who are sent to the east coast are shipped across to a ready market in the Hedjaz.

Once in the capital the dealers (*djellabs*) distribute their stock among their agents in various quarters of the city, and there, although the police are supposed to be on the watch to prevent it, buying and selling go on under the thinnest veil of concealment. An intending purchaser goes to one of the private but perfectly well-known entrepôts in which the dealers and their slaves are lodged, and after examining the latter, selects what suits him, haggles for a time about the price, and finally closes the bargain then and there, or subsequently through a broker, who receives a small commission for the job. The *djellabs* object to show their ware to Europeans, unless they be introduced by a native who is not merely a dragoman; but with that voucher and the thin disguise of a fez and a Stamboulee coat, a sight of whatever is on hand may be easily enough had. Franks are, of course, now forbidden by their own laws to buy or hold slaves, but the prohibition is not always regarded by residents in the native quarters of the city, where, indeed, a single man cannot hire a house nor obtain lodgings unless he have a female slave. Prices range from 10*l.* or 12*l.* for a black boy or girl of as many years old, to 70*l.* or 100*l.* for an Abyssinian girl of from twelve to seventeen or eighteen, and

from 500*l.* to 800*l.* or even 1,000*l.* for a high-class Circasian. Adult women slaves who have already been in service are cheaper, unless their skill in cookery, needlework, or some other useful art, balance the vice of temper or other defect, but for which they are rarely re-sold. The price of males above the age of childhood varies from 20*l.* or 30*l.* to 90*l.* or 100*l.*, Abyssinian youths and men ranging considerably above negroes. The neutral class of eunuchs has a still higher value, but these are now found in only the very wealthiest Moslem families, the rigorous prohibition which the law enforces against their production within Egyptian territory having greatly reduced the supply, and correspondingly heightened their price. Till within a few years ago boy slaves were bought on their way down the Upper Nile, and mutilated at Assiout and some other stations—Coptic priests being amongst the most expert operators—but this practice has now been suppressed, and the whole of the small yearly importation comes ready-made from Kordofan and Darfour. Most of the few who reach Cairo are bought up for Constantinople, where no Turkish "gentleman's" establishment is "complete" without one or more of these neutral police. It may be added that the whole of the slaves imported into Egypt readily adopt the established faith, and soon become the most bigoted and fanatical section of the Moslem population.

Such, briefly noted, are the chief conditions of slavery in Egypt.* How widely they differ from those of the institution whose horrors fired our English abolitionists in the beginning of the present century, and twenty years

* "It must be borne in mind that it is a mild and harmless traffic as compared with slave-trading in other parts of Africa; and that domestic slavery in Egypt presents few of the horrible features which have been witnessed in other parts of the world."—Report of Mr. Beardsley, U.S. Consul-General at Cairo (1873).

ago thrilled both Europe and America in the pages of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," need not be repeated. The one is, in short, simply domestic servitude under practically efficient guarantees against ill-treatment, while the other was the cruelest form of tyranny that man ever exercised over his fellow. But the two systems have this in common—that the same initial cruelties are and were necessary to feed both. This is not so, of course, as regards the white slaves, who are freely sold by their parents, and are themselves consenting parties to the bargain. In their case only the ethical sentiment of Christian as opposed to Mohammedan civilisation is offended; and an apologist of the institution might plausibly enough contend that this incident of it is vastly less immoral than the promiscuous "social evil" which, while sternly reprobated by Moslem law and public feeling, flourishes under police license and almost with social sanction in Europe. It is different, however, with the more numerous class of black slaves, the victims of organised kidnappings and petty tribal wars as cruel as any ever waged on the West Coast; and the sufferings of these it is, during their capture, and till they reach the Nile, which condemn even the mild domestic servitude that must be supplied at this price as absolutely as the brutal exaggeration of it which fifty years ago cursed our own colonies and the United States. If the class were self-recruiting the case would be very different; but dependent as it is on barbarities to which every African traveller from Bruce to Schweinfurth has borne witness, civilisation pronounces against it the same fiat of extinction that abolished slavery in the West. Egypt, it is true, is only in part answerable for these atrocities in the remote interior, the spoils of which find markets equally at Zanzibar, in the Hedjaz, in Tripoli, Tunis, Morocco, and Constantinople; but her share

in the responsibility is still heavy enough to furnish unfriendly critics with a plausible argument against Egyptian civilisation, and the credit of the Cairo Government is therefore directly staked on the complete suppression of this traffic. That the Khedive is fully sensible of this is shown by the efforts he has already made to reduce it to the narrowest limits; and, having done this, his determination to put an end to it altogether may be inferred from the enlarged powers he has conferred on Colonel Gordon to crush it everywhere between the Second Cataract and the Equator. No ruler of Egypt could do more than to entrust such a commission to such a man.* But even with Gordon Pasha in the Soudan, and the Khedive in Cairo, the suppression of the trade and of the institution it keeps alive must needs be slow. Custom and religion have too long consecrated both, for any human power to at once stamp out either. With the gradual suppression, however, of slave-hunting and selling in Darfour and along the Upper Nile, black slave-holding in Egypt proper must perforce die out; and with the withering of that main trunk of the institution the rest will speedily disappear. In the meantime, while this social revolution is being effected, Egyptian legislation and public sentiment may be fairly credited with having minimised the evils which are inseparable from slavery even in its mildest form.

* In a recently published letter on the subject of his new commission, Col. Gordon says:—"I am astounded at the powers he (the Khedive) has placed in my hands. With the Governor-Generalship of the Soudan, it will be my fault if slavery does not cease, and if these vast countries are not open to the world. So there is an end of slavery if God wills, for the whole secret of the matter is in the government of the Soudan, and if the man who holds that government is against it, it must cease."