

EXTRACTS AND OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

FOREIGN SLAVE TRADE.

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ON THE SUBJECT OF SLAVERY.

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EXTRACTS AND OBSERVATIONS.

There are, perhaps, no individuals who have felt the slightest interest in our testimony against Slavery, that have not at some period received information on the subject of the Slave Trade, as carried on from the coast of Africa to various places, including the West India Islands, Brazil, &c. &c.

We are indebted to that eminent philanthropist, Thomas Clarkson, for a lucid exposition of the cruelties of this abominable traffic in human flesh. His faithful and persevering labours in the cause of bleeding Africa, had a powerful tendency to open the eyes of the British Government; and the popular voice of the nation became so clearly expressed, that an act of Parliament was passed, whereby the Slave Trade was abolished, and British subjects who were found engaged in it, were by the laws of their country, declared to be Pirates.

Subsequently to this, the United States of America, in Congress assembled, declared the African Slave Trade to be Piracy—punishable on due conviction, with death.

These strong and rigid enactments, emanating from two powerful nations, had a tendency to quiet, for a time, the public mind, especially as it was obvious that Great Britain was exerting her influence to induce other nations to join in bringing this enormous evil to a speedy termination.

Although the continued existence of the African Slave Trade has been known to the general community, and occasional information, through the public prints, has shed some light on the subject; yet it is believed that few or none have been aware of the horrors of the system as it is now unveiled.

It is through the untiring exertions of Thomas F. Buxton, a member of the British Parliament, and a leading and efficient advocate of emancipation, in that body, that the extent of the African Slave Trade as at present carried on, has been ascertained. His recent work on the subject goes clearly to establish the fact, that notwithstanding the efforts made by the British Government against the traffic in Slaves; notwithstanding the laws of the United States and Brazil; declaring the Slave Trade Piracy,—this dreadful business is still prosecuted with unabated vigour, with augmented cruelty, and a more lavish expenditure of human life, than at the period when Clarkson first made known its real character.

As the information to be derived from the work of Buxton is new, and highly interesting to the cause of humanity, it is believed an advantage would result from a brief selection of some facts.

The following statements may be fully relied on, as they are taken from respectable and responsible authorities, and from public documents, the validity of which cannot be doubted. They are calculated to direct our attention once more towards a testimony, so faithfully borne by a generation that preceded us, and who on account of it, passed through many exercises and much evil report.

In a single port in Brazil, the British minister there resident, states, “that there arrived in the month of January, 1837, 4870 African slaves—in February, 1992—in March, 7395—in April, 5596—in May, 2753—total in five months, 27,437.”*

There was received, according to the evidence furnished by the British commissioners, resident in Brazil, “in the course of twelve months ending on the 30th June, 1830, 78,331”† into that country. In Cuba, *into the Havana alone*, on the same authority, at least 60,000.

* See Buxton, p. 9.

† *Ib.* p. 14.

According to Buxton, it appears that under the flag of the United States, the Slave Trade is unlawfully carried on to a considerable extent; and it is further stated from the same authority, that the only flag under which the Slave Trade can be carried on with impunity, is the American.

“During the months of June, July, August and September, ten vessels fitted for the Slave Trade, sailed from Havana for the coast of Africa, bearing the American flag.”* *Buxton*, p. 24.

Within the last few years the citizens of the United States have built many vessels, “only calculated for piracy and the Slave Trade;” of which some have been sent on speculation to Havana and other slaving ports for sale, and others have been employed in the trade by citizens of the States under the national flag. The list of criminals is not yet complete. It is stated on the testimony of African merchants engaged in the legitimate trade, corroborated

* In confirmation, we give the following Extract from a pamphlet published by our Meeting for Sufferings in 1824, on the African Slave Trade. Page 56.

“The manner in which most of the American slavers carry on their trade is this; they sail from the U. S. to some port in Cuba, with a cargo of blue and white cottons, India checks, nankin, powder, tobacco, &c. where they make a sham sale of the vessel, for the purpose of procuring a set of Spanish papers. The officers make oath that the cargo, entitled to debenture, has been landed, and procure the requisite certificates, whilst every article has remained untouched on board. They then take on board a Spaniard, who passes for the captain, though perhaps this is his first voyage to sea, hoist the Spanish flag, and proceed to the coast of Africa, *north of the line*, keeping three log books, two in Spanish, one true and the other false, and one in English. Having obtained their human cargo, and escaped the vigilance of the cruisers on the coast, the next plan is to arrange the log book to be produced in Cuba, which must show that the slaves were shipped *south of the line*, and the vessel with her cargo is then admitted to entry. When overhauled by the English or Patriot privateers, they exhibit American papers, and when by the Americans, Spanish papers, by which means many escape capture and condemnation.” See *Letter from Cape de Verds*, dated May 29, 1820, published in the Boston Patriot a few months after.

by the authority of M'Lean, governor of Cape-coast Castle, that *one-third* of the slaves are paid for by the dealers in cotton goods, which, to the value of £250,000, in 1836, were "manufactured in Lancashire, and shipped to Brazil, Cuba, the United States and elsewhere, intended for the Slave Trade and adapted *only* for that trade."* It may not be concealed—however humiliating the avowal,—that American and British capital and enterprise are yet among *the main sinews of the Slave Trade*.

Thomas F. Buxton has bestowed considerable research upon a branch of the subject hitherto little known and rarely heard of in this country; "the immense trade which is carried on for the supply of the Mahommedan markets of Morocco, Tunis, Tripoli, Egypt, Turkey, Persia, Arabia, and the borders of Asia."† The yearly numbers absorbed by this branch of the traffic, are estimated at 50,000, though (as in the former cases) the data collected by Buxton would justify a much larger estimate. One feature of the Mahommedan trade is worthy of notice. "By the law of the Koran, *no one is allowed to enslave one of his own faith.*"‡ This precept appears to be strictly observed in favour of the Mahommedan negro. The followers of the impostor of Mecca recognize the bond of brotherhood *only* with each other—Christians profess to do so with *all* mankind. *Their* imperfect law is preserved, unbroken; *our* perfect law, with its Divine sanctions, its rich promises, and its awful threatenings, is contemptuously trodden under foot.

"Such," says Buxton, in reviewing his calculation of the extent of the Slave Trade, "is the arithmetic of the case; and I earnestly solicit my reader, before he proceeds further, to come to a verdict in his own mind upon the fairness and accuracy of these figures. I am aware that it requires far more

* See Buxton, p. 34.

† *Ib.* p. 37.

‡ *Ib.* p. 40.

than ordinary patience to wade through this mass of calculation; I have, however, resolved to present this part of the subject in its dry and uninviting form, partly from utter despair of being able, by any language I could use, to give an adequate image of the extent, variety, and intensity of human suffering which must exist if these figures be true; and partly from the belief that a bare arithmetical detail, free from whatever could excite the imagination or distress the feelings, is best fitted to carry conviction along with it.”*

The next consideration is the loss of life occasioned by the Slave Trade, in addition to the wretched victims who become its living prey.

“Hitherto,” writes Buxton, “I have stated less than the half of this dreadful case. I am now going to show that, besides the 200,000 annually carried into captivity, there are claims on our compassion for almost countless cruelties and murders growing out of the Slave Trade. I am about to prove that this multitude of our enslaved fellow men is but the remnant of numbers vastly greater, the survivors of a still larger multitude, over whom the Slave Trade spreads its devastating hand, and that for every ten who reach Cuba or Brazil, and become available as slaves, fourteen, at least, are destroyed. This mortality arises from the following causes:

1. The original seizure of the slaves.
2. The march to the coast, and detention there.
3. The middle passage.
4. The sufferings after capture, and after landing.

And

5. The initiation into slavery, or the ‘seasoning,’ as it is termed by the planters.”†

The vast continent of Africa is occupied but by two classes; the spoilers and the spoiled: war, rapine, murder, night burnings, slave hunts by *battue*,

* See Buxton, p. 47.

† *Ib.* p. 49.

are the stated occupation of one class, and the perpetual calamity of the other. The following description by a very recent witness (Macgregor Laird) is borne out by every other African traveller of the last and present century.

“Scarcely a night passed, but heard the screams of some unfortunate beings that were carried off into slavery by these villainous depredators. The inhabitants of the towns in the route of the Felatahs fled across the river on the approach of the enemy.” “A few days after the arrival of the fugitives, a column of smoke rising in the air, about five miles above the confluence, marked the advance of the Felatahs; and in two days after the whole of the towns, including Addah, Cudah, and five or six others, were in a blaze. The shrieks of the unfortunate wretches that had not escaped, answered by the loud wailing and lamentations of their friends and relations, (encamped on the opposite side of the river,) at seeing them carried off into slavery, and their habitations destroyed, produced a scene which, though *common enough in the country*, had seldom, if ever before, been witnessed by European eyes, and showed to me, in a more striking light than I had hitherto beheld it, the horrors attendant upon slavery.”*

The next cause of mortality is the march to the coast, or through the desert. Of the latter we quote one specimen from Major Denham’s Travels in Africa.

“Round this spot were lying more than one hundred skeletons: our camels did not come up till dark, and we bivouacked in the midst of those unearthed remains of the victims of persecution and avarice. after a long day’s journey of twenty-six miles, in the course of which one of our party counted 107 of these skeletons.” Shortly afterwards, he adds:

*See Buxton, p. 60.

“During the last two days we had passed on an average from sixty to eighty or ninety skeletons each day; but the numbers that lay about the wells at El Hammar were countless.”*

The journey to the coast is not less a track of misery and death. The loss of life is estimated by none at a lower rate than 30 per cent.

Next comes the detention on the coast. The ships have not arrived, or the market is glutted, or a British cruiser is in waiting—all causes of delay. As the support of the slaves occasions expense, many are left to die of starvation. We are informed by Lander, that the infirm and sickly are pinioned and thrown into the river, or reserved “for more lively torture at the sacrifices.”† Those who are rejected by the slave captains return to land, to encounter death in one or other of these dreadful forms.

The few miserable survivors have yet to endure the more aggravated horrors of the middle passage. The testimony of many witnesses on this point contributed more than any other circumstance to bring about the abolition of the trade by the British Parliament. Yet at that time the trade was legal, and under regulation. It is now illicit, and every consideration is sacrificed to speed and concealment, and it is undeniable that the well meant efforts of the British to suppress the traffic have greatly increased its horrors. We despair of enumerating the forms of death, disease, suffering, and crime, that are inseparable from the voyage; we will therefore quote a single remark of Buxton, to show what an indescribable accumulation of human misery is implied in that short phrase, “the middle passage.”

From the same authority we are informed, that he has received both by letter and in conversation from officers of vessels who have boarded slave ships the same concurrent testimony, viz: “No words can

* See Buxton, p. 83.

† *Ib.* p. 90.

describe the horrors of the scene, or the sufferings of the negroes.”*

The loss of life after capture and after landing still remain to be accounted for. The summary of the whole, for which ample data are given, is as follows:—

“The Slave Trade between Africa and America annually subjects to the horrors of slavery	120,000
And murders, by seizure, transportation and seasoning, &c.	255,000
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Annual victims of christian Slave Trade .	375,000
of Mohammedan	100,000
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Annual loss to Africa	475,000

“Even this is but a part of the total evil. The great evil is, that the Slave Trade exhibits itself in Africa as a barrier, excluding every thing which can soften, or enlighten, or civilize, or elevate the people of that vast continent. The Slave Trade suppresses all other trade, creates endless insecurity, kindles perpetual war, banishes commerce, knowledge, social improvement, and above all christianity, from one quarter of the globe, and from 100,000,000 of mankind.”†

Let the fact be engraven on every memory, that the Slave Trade, besides its living victims, requires the *continual daily sacrifice of about a thousand human lives*; a sacrifice offered at the shrine of Mammon and Moloch, by the remorseless cupidity and cruelty of nations professedly christian. If the entire globe were inhabited by barbarous tribes, Africa would enjoy a state of comparative happiness and tranquillity; but at present the nations of the civilized world are leagued in one large conspiracy against her peace. It is one of the most affecting consider-

* See Buxton, p. 100.

† Ib. p. 170-1.

ations growing out of the subject, that the expanded intellect and commercial enterprise, and the refined luxury of the most enlightened portion of the human family should be employed in rendering that unhappy continent "one universal den of desolation, misery, and crime."

The subject is one painful to every feeling mind; but for that very reason it is the more necessary that the facts should be known and reflected upon. It was a just remark of the celebrated Fox in a debate in Parliament on the Slave Trade; "True humanity consists not in a squeamish ear; it consists not in starting and shrinking at such tales as these, but in a disposition of heart to relieve misery."*

"I am afraid that there is not the remotest probability of inducing all nations to concur in so strong a measure as that of stigmatizing the Slave Trade as Piracy."

"But we will suppose all these difficulties removed: a victory in imagination has been obtained over the pride of North America—the cupidity of Portugal—the lawlessness of Texas—and the constitution of France. Let it be granted that the Spanish Treaty with an article for Piracy has become universal—I maintain that the Slave Trade even then will not be put down. Three nations have already tried the experiment of declaring the Slave Trade to be Piracy—Brazil, North America and England. Brazilian subjects from the time of passing the law, have been continually engaged in the Slave Trade; indeed we are informed, that the whole population of certain districts are concerned in it, and *not one* has suffered under the law of Piracy."†

"Once more then, I must declare my conviction that the Trade will never be suppressed by the system hitherto pursued—you will be defeated by its enormous gains—you may throw impediments in the way of these miscreants; you may augment their

* See Buxton, p. 96.

† Ib. p. 185.

peril; you may reduce their profits; but enough and more than enough will remain to baffle all your humane efforts.”*

This is a discouraging conclusion formed by a man who has so closely investigated the subject in all its aspects, and whose opinions are so entitled to respect. Yet to the benevolent and reflecting mind, one door of hope still remains open—that Slavery itself will be utterly abolished—that the shambles for the sale of human bones and muscles will be broken down; and then the innocent victims of avarice and remorseless cruelty will no longer be carried to a market as source of profit. This is the only remaining plan within the grasp of human agency for the extinction of this crying sin.

Informed, as we are, by this able writer, that American and British capital and enterprize are yet the main sinews of the Slave Trade—an awful consideration presents itself to us and to every citizen of our common country, whether our skirts are clear of blood? Whether we are washing our hands in innocency, and whether we are embracing every opening of duty to plead the cause of the oppressed, and are contributing our share of labour in aiding Ethiopia availingly to stretch out her hands unto God?

Could we turn from this appalling history of the Foreign Slave Trade, and in our own and native land, find a temporary repose to wounded feelings, which this history of cruelty and wrong is calculated to excite, it would at least mitigate the sorrows and exercises which now strew the path. Instead of this, we discover in our very midst the same trade carried on with its accompanying horrors; and it is contemplated by this Committee, to enter upon the investigation of the Domestic Slave Trade; in order if way should open, to present it to the view of Friends, in a subsequent publication.

* See Buxton, p. 190.