

CHEAP TRACTS,

Calculated to promote the Interests of Religion, Virtue, and Humanity.

No. III.

THE

Slave-Trade:

BEING, A DISPLAY OF

SOME OF THE

Shocking Consequences,

OF THAT

Inhuman Traffic:

DESCRIBED IN

An Account of a Voyage to AFRICA to trade for Slaves.

Treatment of Negro-Slaves before they reach the WEST INDIES. And,

An Account of the manner which Slaves are sold in the Plantations.

DUNBAR

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WHOLESALE AND RETAIL.





THE
SLAVE TRADE.

*AH, think how desolate his state,
How he the chearful light must hate ;
Whom sever'd from his native soil,
The morning wakes to fruitless toil ;
To labours hops shall never cheer,
Or fond domestic joy endear ;
Poor wretch o'er whose despairing eyes,
His cherish'd home shall never rise !
Condemn'd, severe extreme, to live
When all is fled that life can give !
But ah ! the blessings valued most
By human minds, are blessings lost !
Unlike the objects of the eye,
Enlarging as we bring them nigh ;
Our joys at distance strike the breast,
And seem diminish'd when possess.*

HELEN MARIA WILLIAMS.

AN ACCOUNT of a Voyage to AFRICA, to
Trade for SLAVES.

Proceedings during the Voyage.

ON the arrival of the ships at Bonny,
and New Calabar, they unbend the
sails, strike the yards and topmasts, and

build what they denominate a house. This is effected in the following manner. The sailors first lash the booms and yards from mast to mast, in order to form a ridge-pole. About ten feet above the deck, several spars, equal in length to the ridge-pole, are next lashed to the standing rigging, and form a wall-plate. Across the ridge-pole and wall-plate, several other spars or rafters are afterwards laid and lashed, at the distance of about six inches from each other. On these, other rafters or spars are laid length-wise, equal in extent to the ridge-pole, so as to form a kind of lattice, with interstices of six inches square. The roof is covered with mats, made of rushes, fastened with rope-varn, and so placed as to lap over each other like tiles. The space between the deck and the wall-plate, is likewise enclosed with a lattice formed of sticks, lashed across each other, and leaving vacancies of about four inches square. Near the main-mast, a partition is constructed of inch deal boards, which reaches athwart the ship. This division is called a barricado. It is about eight feet in height, and is made to project near two feet over the sides of the ship. In this barricado there is a door, at which a centinel is placed during the time the negroes are permitted to come upon deck. It serves to keep the different sexes apart; and as there are small holes in it

wherein blunderbusses are fixed, and sometimes a cannon, it is found convenient for quelling insurrections. Another door is made in the lattice, at the ladder, by which you enter the ship. This door is guarded by a centinel during the day, and is locked at night. At the head of the ship there is a third door, for the use of the sailors, which is secured in the same manner as that at the gangway. There is also in the roof a large trap-door, through which the goods intended for barter, the water casks, &c. are hoisted out or in.

The design of this house is to secure those on board from the heat of the sun, the wind and rain; it answers these purposes however but very ineffectually. The slight texture of the mats admits both the wind and the rain, whenever it happens to be violent, though at the same time, it increases the heat of the ship to a very pernicious degree; especially between decks. The increased warmth occasioned by this means, together with the smoke produced from the green mangrove (the usual firewood), which, for want of a current of air to carry it off, collects itself in large quantities, and infects every part of the ship, render a vessel during its stay here very unhealthy. The smoke also, by its acrimonious quality, often produces inflammations in the eyes, which terminates sometimes in the loss of sight.

Another purpose for which these temporary houses are erected, is, to prevent the purchased negroes from leaping overboard, which the horrors of their situation frequently impel them to attempt; and they now & then effect it, notwithstanding all the precautions that are taken, by forcing their way through the lattice work.

The slave ships generally lie near a mile below the town, in Bonny river, in seven or eight fathom water. Sometimes fifteen sail, English and French, but chiefly the former, meet here together. Soon after they cast anchor, the captains go on shore, to make known their arrival, and to enquire into the state of the trade. They likewise invite the kings of Bonny to come on board, to whom, previous to breaking bulk, they usually make presents (termed dashes) consisting of cloth, cotton, chintz, silk handkerchiefs & other India goods, and sometimes of brandy wine, or beer.

Bonny, a few years ago, was the residence of two kings, named Norfolk and Peppel. The houses of these princes were not distinguished from the cottages or huts of which the town consists, in any other manner than by being of somewhat larger dimensions, & surrounded with warehouses containing European goods, designed for the purchase of slaves. These slaves, which the kings procure in the same manner as the black tra-

ders do theirs, are sold by them to the ships. And for every negroe sold there by the traders, the kings receive a duty, which amounts to a considerable sum in the course of a year. This duty is collected by officers, stationed on board the ships, who are termed officer boys.

The kings of Bonny are absolute, though elective. They are assisted in the government by a small number of persons of a certain rank, who are styled parliament gentlemen; an office which they generally hold for life. Every ship on its arrival, is expected to send a present to these gentlemen, of bread and beef, and to treat them as often as they come on board. When they do this their approach to the ship is announced by blowing through a hollow elephant's tooth, which produces a sound resembling that of a post-horn.

After the kings have been on board, and have received the usual presents, permission is granted by them for trafficking with any of the black traders. When the royal guests return from the ships, they are saluted by the guns.

From the time of the arrival of the ships to their departure, which is usually near three months, scarce a day passes without some negroes being purchased, and carried on board; sometimes in small, and sometimes in larger numbers. The whole number taken on board, depends in a

great measure, on circumstances. In a voyage I once made, our stock of merchandize was exhausted in the purchase of about 380 negroes, which was expected to have procured 500. The number of English & French ships then at Bonny, had so far raised the price of negroes, as to occasion this difference.

The reverse was known during the late war. When I was last at Bonny, I frequently made enquiries on this head, of one of the black traders, whose intelligence I believe I can depend upon. He informed me that only one ship had been there for three years during that period; and that was the Moseley-Hill, captain Ewing, from Liverpool, who made an extraordinary purchase, as he found negroes remarkably cheap from the dulness of trade. Upon enquiring into the consequence of this decay of trade, he shrugged upon his shoulders and answered, "only making us traders poorer, and obliging us to work for our maintenance." One of these black merchants being informed, that a particular set of people, called Quakers, were for abolishing the trade, he said, "it was a very bad thing as they should then be reduced to the same state they were in during the war, when, through poverty, they were obliged to dig the ground and plant yams."

I was once upon the coast of Angola also, when there had not been a slave-ship at the river Ambris for five years previous to our arrival, altho' a place to which many usually resort every year; and the failure of the trade for that period, as far as we could learn, had not any other effect than to restore peace and confidence among the natives; which upon the arrival of any ships, is immediately destroyed, by the inducement then held forth in the purchase of slaves. And during the suspension of trade at Bonny, as above mentioned, none of the dreadful proceedings which are so confidently asserted to be the natural consequence of it, were known. The reduction of the price of negroes, and the poverty of the black traders, appear to have been the only bad effects of the discontinuance of trade; the good ones were, most probably, the restoration of peace and confidence among the natives, and a suspension of kidnapping.

When the ships have disposed of all their merchandize in the purchase of negroes, and have laid in their stock of wood, water, and yams, they prepare for sailing, by getting up the yards and top-masts, reeving the running rigging, bending the sails, and by taking down the temporary house. They then drop down the river, to wait for a favourable opportunity to pass over the bar, which is formed by a number of sand-banks lying across the mouth of the river, with

navigable channels between them. It is not uncommon for ships to get upon the bar, and sometimes they are lost.

The first place the slave-ships touch at in their passage to the West-Indies, is either the island of St. Thomas, or Princes island, where they usually carry their sick on shore, for the benefit of the air, and likewise replenish their stock of water. The former of these islands is nearly circular, being one hundred and twenty miles round, and lies exactly under the equator, about forty-five leagues from the African continent. It abounds with wood and water, and produces Indian corn, rice, fruits, sugar, and some cinnamón. The air is rather prejudicial to an European constitution, nevertheless it is well peopled by the Portuguese. Princes island, which is much smaller, lies in 1 deg. 30 min. north latitude, and likewise produces Indian corn, and a variety of fruits and roots, besides sugar-canes, black cattle, hogs and goats are numerous there; but it is infested with a mischievous and dangerous species of monkeys.

During one of the voyages I made, I was landed upon the island of St. Thomas, with near one hundred sick negroes, who were placed in an old house, taken on purpose for their reception. Little benefit however accrued from their going on shore, as several of them died there, and the remainder continued nearly in the same situation as

when they were landed, though our continuance was prolonged for about twelve days.

Upon the arrival of the slave-ships in the West-Indies, a day is fixed for the sale of their cargoes.

The whole of the cargoes being disposed off, the ships are made ready, for it is very seldom, however, that they are not detained for want of a sufficient number of sailors, as this trade may justly be denominated the grave of seamen. Though the crews of the ships upon their leaving England, generally amount to between forty and fifty men, scarcely three-fourths, and sometimes not one-third of the compliment, ever return to the port from whence they sailed, through mortality and desertion.

The time during which the slave-ships are absent from England, varies according to the destination of the voyage, and the number of ships on the coast. To Bonny, or Old and New Calabar, a voyage is usually performed in about ten months. Those to the windward and gold coasts, are rather more uncertain, but in general from fifteen to eighteen months.

After permission has been obtained for breaking trade, the captains go ashore to make their purchases. The unhappy wretches thus disposed of, are bought by the black traders at fairs, which are held for that purpose, at the distance of upwards of two hund-

red nails from the sea coast; and these fairs are supplied from an interior part of the country. Many negroes, upon being questioned relative to the places of their nativity have asserted, that they have travelled during the revolution of several moons, before they have reached the places where they were purchased by the black traders. At these fairs, which are held generally every six weeks, several thousands are frequently exposed to sale, and they consist chiefly of men and boys, the women seldom exceeding a third of the whole number. From forty to two hundred negroes are generally purchased at a time by the black traders, and are of all ages, from a month to sixty years and upwards. The slaves purchased at these fairs are only for the supply of the markets at Bonny, and Old and New Calabar. Most of the negroes shipped from the coast of Africa are kidnaped: and it frequently happens, that those who kidnap others, are themselves, in their turns, seized and sold.

Continual enmity is thus fostered among the negroes of Africa, and all social intercourse destroyed; which most assuredly would not be the case, had they not these opportunities of finding a ready sale for each other.

The preparations made at Bonny by the black traders, upon setting out for the fairs which are held up the country, are very considerable. From twenty to thirty ca-

canoes capable of containing thirty or forty negroes each, are assembled for this purpose and such goods put on board them as they expect will be wanted for the purchase of the number of slaves they intend to buy. When their loading is completed, they commence their voyage, with colours flying and music playing; and in about ten or eleven days, they generally return to Bonny with full cargoes. As soon as the canoes arrive at the trader's landing-place, the purchased negroes are cleaned, and oiled with palm-oil; and on the following day they are exposed for sale to the captains.

When the negroes, whom the black traders have to dispose of, are shewn to the European purchasers, they first examine them relative to their age: they then minutely inspect their persons, and enquire into the state of their health; if they are afflicted with any infirmity, or are deformed, or have bad eyes or teeth; if they are lame, or weak in the joints, or distorted in the back, or of a slender make, or are narrow in the chest; in short, if they have been, or are afflicted in any manner, so as to render them incapable of much labour; if any of the foregoing defects are discovered in them, they are rejected: but if approved of, they are generally taken on board the ship the same evening. The purchaser has liberty to return on the following morning, but not

afterwards such as upon re-examination are found exceptionable.

The traders frequently beat those negroes which are objected to by the captains, and use them with great severity. It matters not whether they are refused on account of age, illness, deformity, or for any other reason. At New Calabar, in particular, the traders have frequently been known to put them to death. Instances have happened at that place, that the traders, when any of their negroes have been objected to, have dropped their canoes under the stern of the vessel, and instantly beheaded them, in sight of the captain.

Upon the Windward Coast, another mode of procuring slaves is pursued; which is, by what they term *boating*; a mode that is very pernicious and destructive to the crews of the ships. The sailors, who are employed upon this trade go in boats up the rivers, seeking for negroes, among the villages seated on the banks of them: but this method is very slow, and not always effectual; for, after being absent from the ship during a fortnight or three weeks, they sometimes return with only from eight to twelve negroes. Numbers of these are procured in consequence of alleged crimes, which, as before observed, whenever any ships are upon the coast, are more productive than at any other period. Kidnapping, however, prevails here.

*Treatment of Negro Slaves before they reach
the West Indies.*

AS soon as the Africans, purchased at the fairs, fall into the hands of the black traders, they experience an earnest of those dreadful sufferings which they are doomed in future to undergo. Before they can reach the fairs, great numbers perish from cruel usage, want of food, travelling through inhospitable deserts &c. They are brought from the places where they are purchased to Bonny, &c. in canoes; at the bottom of which they lie, having their hands tied with twigs and a strict watch kept over them. Their usage in other respects, during the time of the passage, which generally lasts several days, is equally cruel. Their allowance of food is so scanty, that it is barely sufficient to support nature. They are besides, much exposed to the violent rains which frequently fall here, being covered only with mats that afford but a slight defence; and as there is usually water at the bottom of the canoes, from their leaking, they are scarcely ever dry.

Nor do these unhappy beings, after they become the property of the Europeans find their situation in the least amended. The men negroes, on being brought aboard the ship, are immediately fastened together, two and two, by hand-cuffs on their wrists, and by irons rivetted on their legs. They are

then sent down between the decks, and placed in an apartment partitioned off for that purpose. The women likewise are placed in a separate apartment between decks, but without being ironed. And an adjoining room, on the same deck, is appointed for the boys.

But, they are frequently stowed so close, as to admit of no other posture than lying on their sides. Neither will the height between decks, unless directly under the grating, permit them the indulgence of an erect posture; especially where there are platforms, which is generally the case. These platforms are a kind of shelf, about eight or nine feet in breadth, extending from the side of the ship towards the center.—They are placed nearly midway between the decks, at the distance of two or three feet from each deck. Upon these the negroes are stowed in the same manner as they are on the deck underneath.

In each of the apartments are placed three or four large buckets, of a conical form, being near two feet in diameter at the bottom, and only one foot at the top, and in depth about twenty-eight inches; to which, when necessary, the negroes have recourse. It often happens, that those who are placed at a distance from the buckets, in endeavouring to get to them, tumble over their companions, in consequence of their being

shackled. These accidents, although unavoidable, are productive of continual quarrels, in which some of them are always bruised. In this distressed situation, unable to proceed, and prevented from getting to the tubs they desist from the attempt; and, as the necessities of nature are not to be repelled, ease themselves as they lie. This becomes a fresh source of broils and disturbances. and tends to render the condition of the captives still more uncomfortable. The nuisance arising from these circumstances, is not unfrequently increased by the tubs being much too small for the purpose intended, and their being usually emptied but once every day. The rule for doing this, however, varies in different ships according to the attention paid to the health and convenience of the slaves by the captain.

About eight o'clock in the morning the negroes are generally brought upon deck. Their irons being examined, a long chain, which is locked to a ring-bolt, fixed in the deck, is run through the rings of the shackles of the men, and then locked to another ring-bolt, fixed also in the deck. By this means fifty, or sixty, and sometimes more, are fastened to one chain, in order to prevent them from rising, or endeavouring to escape. If the weather proves favourable, they are permitted to remain in that situ-

ation till four or five in the afternoon, when they are disengaged from the chain, and sent down.

The diet of the negroes, while on board, consists chiefly of horse-beans, boiled, to the consistence of a pulp; of boiled yams and rice, and sometimes of a small quantity of beef or pork. The latter are frequently taken from the provisions laid in for the sailors. They sometimes make use of sauce, composed of palm-oil, mixed with flour, water, and pepper, which the sailors call slabber-sauce. Yams are the favourite food of the Eboe, or Bight negroes, and rice or corn, of those from the Gold and Windward coasts; each preferring the produce of their native soil.

In their own country, the negroes in general live on animal food and fish, with roots, yams and Indian corn.—The horse-beans & rice, with which they are fed aboard ship, are chiefly taken from Europe. The latter, indeed, is sometimes purchased on the coast, being far superior to any other.

The Gold coast negroes scarcely ever refuse any food that is offered them, and they generally eat larger quantities of whatever is placed before them, than any other species of negroes, whom they likewise excel in strength of body and mind. Most of the slaves have such an aversion to the horse-beans, that unless they are narrowly watched, when fed upon deck, they will throw them

over board, or in each other's faces when they quarrel.

They are commonly fed twice a day about eight o'clock in the morning and four in the afternoon. In most ships they are only fed with their own food once a day. Their food is served up to them in tubs about the size of a small water bucket. They are placed round these tubs in companies of ten to each tub, out of which they feed themselves with wooden spoons. These they soon lose, and when they are not allowed others, they feed themselves with their hands. In favourable weather they are fed upon deck, but in bad weather their food is given them below. Numberless quarrels take place among them during their meals; more especially when they are put upon short allowance, which frequently happens, if the passage from the coast of Guinea to the West India islands, proves of unusual length. In that case, the weak are obliged to be content with a very scanty portion.— Their allowance of water is about half a pint each at every meal. It is handed round in a bucket, and given to each negroe in a pannekin; a small utensil with a strait handle, somewhat similar to a sauce-boat. However, when the ships approach the islands with a favourable breeze; they are no longer restricted.

Upon the negroes refusing to take sustenance, coals of fire are put on a shovel, and placed so near their lips, as to scorch and burn them; accompanied with threats, of forcing them to swallow the coals, if they persist in refusing to eat.

Exercise being deemed necessary for the preservation of their health, they are sometimes obliged to dance when the weather will permit their coming on deck. The poor wretches are frequently compelled to sing also; but when they do so, their songs are generally melancholy lamentations of their exile from their native country.

The women are furnished with beads for the purpose of affording them some diversion. But this end is generally defeated by the squabbles which are occasioned, in consequence of their stealing them from each other.

On board some ships, the common sailors are allowed to have intercourse with such of the black women whose consent they can procure. And some of them have been known to take the inconstancy of their passions so much to heart, as to leap overboard and drown themselves. The officers are permitted to indulge their passions among them at pleasure, and sometimes are guilty of such brutal excesses, as disgrace human nature.

Negroes are far more violently affected by sea-sicknets than Europeans. It fre-

quently terminates in death, especially among the women. Most of the ships of the slave-trade are provided, between the decks, with five or six air-ports on each side of the ship; of about six inches in length, four in breadth; in addition to which, for a few ships have wind-sails. But whenever the sea is rough, and the rain heavy, it becomes necessary to shut these, and every other conveyance by which the air is admitted. The fresh air being thus excluded, the negroes rooms very soon grow intolerably hot. The confined air, rendered noxious by the effluvia exhaled from their bodies, and by being repeatedly breathed, soon produces fevers and fluxes, which generally carry off great numbers of them.

The place allotted for the sick negroes is under the half deck, where they lie on the bare planks. By this means, those who are emaciated, frequently have their skin, and even their flesh, entirely rubbed off, by the motion of the ship, from the prominent parts of the shoulders, elbows, and hips, so as to render the bones in those parts quite bare. And some of them, by constantly lying in the blood and mucus, that had flowed from those afflicted with the flux, and which, as before observed, is generally so violent as to prevent their being kept clean, have their flesh much sooner rubbed off, than those who have only to contend with the mere

tion of the ship. The excruciating pain which the poor sufferers feel from being obliged to continue in such a dreadful situation, frequently for several weeks, in case they happen to live so long, is not to be conceived or described. Few, indeed, are ever able to withstand the fatal effects of it. The most skill of the surgeon is here inefficual. If plaisters be applied, they are very soon displaced by the friction of the ship; when bandages are used, the negroes very soon take them off, and appropriate them to other purposes.

Almost the only means by which the surgeon can render himself useful to the negroes, is by seeing that their food is properly cooked, and distributed among them. It is true, when they arrive near the markets for which they are destined, care is taken to polish them for sale, by an application of the lunar caustic to such as are affected with the yaws. This, however, affords but a temporary relief, as the disease most assuredly breaks out, whenever the patient is put upon a vegetable diet.

The lots of slaves, through mortality, arising from the causes just mentioned, are frequently very considerable. One half, sometimes two thirds, and even beyond that, have been known to perish. On the Windward coast, where slaves are procured slowly, very few die, in proportion to the num-

bers which die at Bonny, and at Old and New Calabar, where they are obtained much faster; the latter being of a more delicate make and habit.

As very few negroes can so far brook the loss of liberty, and the hardships they endure, with any degree of patience, they are ever upon the watch to take advantage of the least negligence in their oppressors. Insurrections are frequently the consequence; which are seldom suppressed without much bloodshed. Sometimes these are successful, and the whole ship's company cut off. They are likewise always ready to seize every opportunity for committing some act of desperation to free themselves from their miserable state; and notwithstanding the restraints under which they are laid, they often succeed.

An Account of the Manner in which Slaves are sold in the Plantations.

WHEN the ships arrive in the West Indies, these slaves are disposed of by different methods.

Sometimes the mode of disposal is that of selling them by what is termed a *scramble* and a day is soon fixed for that purpose. But previous thereto, the sick, or refuse slaves, of which there are frequently many, are usually conveyed on shore, and sold at a tavern by vendue, or public auction.

These, in general, are purchased by the Jews and surgeons, but chiefly the former, upon speculation, at so low a price as five or six dollars a head. Sometimes the captains march their slaves through the town at which they intend to dispose of them; and then place them in rows where they are examined and purchased.

The mode of selling them by scramble is as follows.

The negroes being landed, and placed together in a large yard, belonging to the merchants to whom the ship is consigned. As soon as the hour agreed on arrives, the doors of the yard are suddenly thrown open, and in a rush the purchasers, with all the voracity of brutes. Some instantly seize such of the negroes as they can conveniently lay hold of with their hands. Others, being prepared with several handkerchiefs tied together, encircle with these as many as they are able. While others, by means of a rope affect the same purpose. It is scarcely possible to describe the confusion of which this mode of selling is productive. It likewise causes much animosity among the purchasers, who, not unfrequently upon these occasions, fall out and quarrel with each other; and often the poor astonished negroes are so much terrified by these proceedings, that several of them, through fear, climb over the wall of the court yard, and run wild

about the town; but are soon hunted down and retaken.

- When the scramble is on ship-board, the negroes are collected together upon the main and quarter decks, and the ship darkened by sails suspended over them, in order to prevent the purchasers from being able to see, so as to pick or chuse. The signal being given, the buyers rush in to seize their prey; when the negroes appear to be extremely terrified, and many of them jump into the sea. But they are soon retaken, chiefly by boats from other ships.

On board a ship, lying at Port Maria, in Jamaica, the poor negroes were greatly terrified. The women in particular, clung to each other in agonies scarcely to be conceived, shrieking through excels of terror, at the savage manner in which their brutal purchasers rushed upon, and seized them. Though humanity, one should imagine, would dictate to the captains to apprize the poor negroes of the mode by which they were to be sold, and by that means to guard them, in some degree, against the surprise and terror which must attend it.

F I N I S