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P A P E R S

RELATING TO THE

ABOLITION of the SLAVE TRADE:

VIZ.

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- No. 11.—Memorandum; dated Foreign Office, 26th March 1810.
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Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be printed, 12th April 1810.

—No. 1.—

NOTE from Lords Holland and Auckland, to Messrs Monroe and Pinkney.

Downing-Street, 15th October 1806.

LORD Holland and Lord Auckland have the honour to inform Mr. Monroe and Mr. Pinkney, that a joint Address of the two Houses of Parliament, was presented to His Majesty on Wednesday the 25th June 1806; beseeching His Majesty to take such measures as in his wisdom he shall judge proper, for establishing, by negotiation with Foreign Powers, a concert and agreement for abolishing the African Slave Trade; and they cannot help expressing their confidence, as it is their earnest wish, that Mr. Monroe and Mr. Pinkney will be disposed to co-operate with them in the most cordial manner, for effectually promoting the objects of that Address.

—No. 2.—

Extract of a DISPATCH from the Honourable D. M. Erskine, to Lord Viscount Howick.

Washington, 30th March 1807.

The Laws that were passed during the last Session of Congress, have not as yet been printed. But there were only two that were particularly connected with His Majesty's interest; the Abolition of the Slave Trade, from the 1st of January 1808, and the Act.

—No. 3.—

Copy of a DISPATCH from Mr. Secretary Canning, to Lord Viscount Strangford.

My Lord,

Foreign Office, 15th April 1807.

After the solemn and final decision of the Legislature of this Kingdom, with respect to the Abolition of the Slave Trade, in as far as His Majesty's subjects have been engaged therein; it is extremely desirable that the principles of justice and humanity, by which the King and His Parliament have been actuated on deciding in this important measure,

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measure, should not be thwarted nor frustrated by the pertinacity of other Powers, in allowing their subjects to continue this disgraceful Traffick. By the concurrence of a majority of the principal maritime Nations of Europe, it has been prohibited, and His Majesty cannot entertain the suspicion, that taking the advantage of the legislative exclusion of British Subjects from this Trade, the Subjects of Portugal will be encouraged in the prosecution, much more in the extension of it by the countenance or protection of their Government.

I have therefore to signify to your Lordship His Majesty's pleasure, that you omit no opportunity to represent to the Portuguese Ministers, the general benefit that would result from the accession of the Government of Portugal, to the fullest extent of the measures which the British Legislature, after the most patient and laborious investigation, has finally determined to adopt, on a question which has so long interested and agitated the public mind in this and in every other civilized Country.

If, however, from any contracted, and (as there is no doubt that it will prove to be) mistaken policy, the Portuguese Government should persist in allowing their subjects to prosecute this Traffick, His Majesty has an undoubted right to require that their commercial operations should be confined to the territories in Africa, which the Portuguese Traders have hitherto been accustomed to frequent, and should not be extended to the Tract of Coast which His Majesty has determined to abandon, and to leave to the undisturbed possession of its native inhabitants.

I am, &c.

(Signed)

GEO. CANNING.

—No. 4.—

Copy of a DISPATCH from Mr. Secretary Canning, to Lord Viscount Strangford.

My Lord,

17th April 1808.

The Portuguese Settlement of Bissas on the western coast of Africa, is in the midst of a Territory in which the Slave Trade is now nearly disused, and, from its situation, interrupts the progress of the endeavours which has been made of late years, to afford to, at least a considerable portion of the Coast of that Continent, a chance of improvement and repose.

If your Lordship should see no immediate prospect of being able to obtain the assent of the Portuguese Government, to the principle which, by my other Dispatch on the Slave Trade, you are directed to inculcate; your Lordship will endeavour to persuade the Portuguese Government, even if in other places the Slave Trade shall still continue, to abandon the Traffick in Slaves at this particular Settlement, (retaining whatever other Commerce may belong to it), or to ascertain whether on any and what Conditions the Portuguese Government might be induced to cede it to His Majesty.

I am, &c.

(Signed)

GEO. CANNING.

—No. 5.—

Copy of a DISPATCH from Mr. Secretary Canning, to Lord Viscount Strangford.

My Lord,

Foreign Office, April 17, 1808.

Your Lordship was instructed by me, during the last year of your residence at Lisbon, to make earnest representations to the Portuguese Government, on the subject of the African Slave Trade.

I stated on that occasion to your Lordship, the grounds on which it appeared to the British Government to be no less for the interest than for the honour of Portugal, that she should not continue to maintain a Traffick as unjustifiable as impolitic; productive at once of so much misery to the Country, from which the supply of Slaves is drawn, and of so much insecurity to those into which they are imported.

If these considerations were pressed upon the attention of the Portuguese Government, at a time when its South American possessions were only secondary objects of its solicitude, their importance is increased ten-fold, now that Brazil is become the Seat of the Monarchy, and when therefore to augment and strengthen the population of that Country, is a concern of the most vital necessity.

A continued importation of Negroes, capable neither of being incorporated into

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the class of the community, nor of imbibing any sentiment of attachment for the Prince, must contribute to weaken the general power of resistance against an Enemy, to multiply the sources of internal danger, and to check the progress of valuable improvement, and the growth of a native population.

On the other hand, that article of produce to which the labour of Slaves is for the most part applied, and which it will probably be contended by the Portuguese Government is not to be raised by the exertions of any other description of Labourers, is unquestionably that, from the cultivation of which the Brazilian Empire is likely to derive the least part of its permanent prosperity, and of which even the immediate profit in the present state of the World, scarcely repays the cost of its production.

With respect to Cotton, though raised by the same means, at present there is nothing in the nature of its Culture that should render the labour of Africans peculiarly applicable to it.

But whatever be the motives of immediate convenience, or the force of existing habits, the immense interest which the Prince Regent has at stake in the permanent prosperity of his Country, will, it is hoped, overbalance mere temporary considerations, and lead his Royal Highness to take steps at least for the gradual disuse, and ultimate and not distant Abolition of a Trade so disgraceful to human nature.

Your Lordship is plainly to signify to the Portuguese Government, that in any Treaty which shall contain the final arrangement of the relations of the two Countries, you will be instructed to propose an article for this object; and you will express His Majesty's just expectation, that so long as that Trade shall be continued by the Portuguese, they shall at least abstain from furnishing Slaves to other Nations, and shall forbear from any parts of the Coast of Africa, to which British Ships have heretofore been used to resort, and which by the benevolence and justice of the British Legislature have been delivered from that visitation.

I am, &c.

(Signed)

GEO. CANNING.

Viscount Strangford.

—No. 6.—

Extract of a DISPATCH from Lord Viscount Strangford, to Mr. Secretary Canning.

Lisbon, June 4, 1807.

I have lately had some interesting conversation with M. d'Aranjo, on the subject of your Dispatch, No. 1.

He began by declaring his ignorance of the precise wishes of His Majesty's Government, respecting the steps to be taken by Portugal for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. If His Majesty's Government expected Portugal to annihilate, or even to discourage that Trade, he had no difficulty in declaring, that such a measure was utterly impracticable at present; and that there were no means of collecting public opinion in this Country, nor of rendering the Abolition so generally popular as to make the rights and interest of Colonies a comparatively small consideration.

That those Colonists were in effect the very persons whom this Government feared most to disoblige; and finally, that England could afford to make experiments, which would prove destructive if hazarded by any other Nation.

He admired the philanthropy of His Majesty's Government, but he declared frankly that he should be sorry to imitate it.

He entered at great length into accounts of the actual state of the Portuguese Colonies, and endeavoured to prove that their very existence would be endangered by the adoption of any new system of cultivation, however plausible and apparently favourable to the general interests of humanity.

I do not repeat M. d'Aranjo's arguments, because I am persuaded that His Majesty's Government will find nothing new in his mode of treating the subject.

But on the other hand, said M. d'Aranjo, if Great Britain merely expects an assurance that the Portuguese Legislature will not hold out improper and extraordinary encouragement to the persons concerned in the Slave Trade, thus taking undue advantage of the legal incapacity of British Subjects to carry on that Traffick; if she requires a promise that the Portuguese traders will abandon that Tract of Coast which His Majesty has determined to leave to the undisturbed possession of its native inhabitants, no hesitation will be made to give such assurance, in any mode that may be deemed expedient.

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It is, however, he continued, to be distinctly understood, that Portugal will not forego the right which she undoubtedly possesses of providing her own Colonies with Slaves from other parts of her Dominions, and that the Traffick thereof is still to be kept up at Cabinda, the source from whence the Portuguese Colonies are principally supplied.

—No. 7.—

Extract of a DISPATCH from Lord Viscount Strangford, to Mr. Secretary Canning.

Rio de Janeiro, 30th September 1808.

My communications with the Portuguese Government on the subject of the African Slave Trade, have assumed an official form, and shall be duly laid before you.

I dare not, however, flatter myself that my exertions on that most interesting subject will be completely successful.

I have some reason to believe that the Prince Regent would be contented to cede the Settlement of Bissau to His Majesty, either in perpetuity or for a term of years.

I have not yet received any regular overtures on this matter, but should such a proposal be made to me, I shall not hesitate to take it "*ad referendum*."

—No. 8.—

DISPATCH from Mr. Secretary Canning, to the Right Honourable J. H. Frere.

Foreign Office, 7th October 1808.

Sir,

I enclose to you a Copy of a Dispatch which I address by His Majesty's commands to Lord Strangford, His Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Prince Regent of Portugal, at the time of that Minister's departure for the Brazils on the subject of the Slave Trade, as connected with the Portuguese Dominions in South America.

So many of the circumstances and arguments stated in this Dispatch apply also to Spanish America, that I have thought it right to put you in possession of them; and, though I am not to instruct you to bring forward at present any distinct proposition upon the subject of the Slave Trade, I have yet to desire that you will keep that subject so far in your view, as to omit no favourable opportunity of explaining and enforcing the principles which have guided the conduct of the British Government upon it.

I am, &c.

(Signed) GEO. CANNING.

—No. 9.—

DISPATCH from Lord Viscount Strangford, to Mr. Secretary Canning.

Sir,

Rio de Janeiro, 7th June 1809.

It has been represented to me, that the Master of a British Merchantman, which sailed from this port some time ago (bound to the River of Plate), having fallen in with a Portuguese African Trader, did actually purchase Slaves on board of that Vessel, and convey them in his own Ship to Buenos Ayres, where they were sold by him in a clandestine and illegal manner.

In order to guard against the recurrence of similar practices, I have taken upon myself to insert a Clause (of which a Copy is annexed) in the body of the Licence granted by me in the name of the South Sea Company, to British Vessels trading with Spanish America, declaring that these Licences shall become altogether null and void, in case it should appear that the Ships to which they had been granted had, directly or indirectly, engaged in the Slave Trade, or in the conveyance of Slaves, subsequently to the dates of the Licences.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

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(Inclosure referred to in No. 9.)

Additional CLAUSE inserted by Lord Viscount Strangford, in Licences granted to British Ships trading to the River of Plate.

Provided, however, that the said Ship or Vessel be not employed, directly or indirectly, by her Owners or by others, in trafficking or trading in Slaves, or in the transporting or conveying thereof; in which case the present Licence is to stand null and void, and the said Ship or Vessel is to become liable to the pains and penalties enumerated in the said Act of the ninth of Queen Anne.

No. 10.

Copy of a DISPATCH from Mr. Secretary Canning, to the Marquis Wellesley.

Foreign Office, 8th July 1809.

My Lord,

In my Dispatch, No. 8, to Mr. Frere, your Excellency will have observed, that I transmitted to that Minister a Copy of a Dispatch to Lord Strangford, His Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Court of Brazil, in which I signified to Lord Strangford His Majesty's commands, that he should exert himself to procure the consent and co-operation of the Court of Brazil, to the great work of abolishing the Trade in Slaves; and that I recommended to Mr. Frere to take any favourable opportunity of inculcating similar sentiments among the persons in authority in Spain, though of course without making any demand, or requiring any formal pledge upon the subject.

I have now the satisfaction to inclose to your Excellency the Copy of an Article in a Treaty, which has been concluded* between Lord Strangford and the Portuguese Government at Rio de Janeiro, in which your Excellency will find the principles which His Majesty was desirous of seeing adopted by his Ally, recognized to their full extent, and considerable hopes held out of their being at least gradually acted upon by the Brazilian Government.

Note—This Treaty has not yet been ratified, having been returned to the Brazils with some alterations.

Such an admission by a Government which may be supposed to be so much interested at the present moment in the continuance of a Trade interwoven with the habits of their Subjects, and with the system of cultivation throughout the Dominions where the Court at present resides, will furnish your Excellency with new topics for urging the adoption of a similar policy by Spain, whenever a fit opportunity shall occur for bringing that discussion forward.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) GEORGE CANNING.

His Excellency
Marquis Wellesley.

—No. 11.—

MEMORANDUM.

Foreign Office, March 26, 1810.

An Article upon the subject of the Slave Trade has been inserted in the Brazil Treaty, now under consideration, stipulating for the adoption, on the part of the Prince Regent, of measures for effecting a gradual Abolition of that Trade throughout his Dominions.

—No. 12.—

MEMORANDUM.

Foreign Office, April 11, 1810.

The following Article on the subject of the Slave Trade, was inserted in the American Treaty, which was signed on the 31st December 1806, by Lords Holland and Auckland, and by Messrs. James Monroe and William Pinkney, but was returned from America not ratified.

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Article 24.

The high contracting Parties engage to communicate to each other, without delay, all such Laws as have been or shall be hereafter enacted by their respective Legislatures, as also all measures which shall have been taken for the abolition or limitation of the African Slave Trade; and they further agree to use their best endeavours to procure the co-operation of other Powers, for the final and complete Abolition of a Trade so repugnant to the principles of justice and humanity.

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ABOLITION of the SLAVE TRADE.

*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be printed,
12th April 1810.*
