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SLAVERY IN CEYLON.

COPY of a DESPATCH from the Governor of *Ceylon*, dated the 13th of August 1838, on the subject of SLAVERY in that Island; together with Copy of the REPLY to that Despatch.

(In Continuation of the Papers ordered by The House of Commons to be Printed, 31 July 1838, No. 697.)

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed, 29 July 1839.

(No. 130.)
My Lord,

The Queen's House, Colombo,
13 August, 1838.

I HAVE the very great satisfaction of transmitting to your Lordship a Memorandum of the number of slaves formally manumitted since the meeting of the Legislative Council on 28th June 1838; also of the number of slaves registered in 1838, under the Ordinance No. 3, of 1837; and a Return of the number of slaves according to the latest census, so far as the reports received instruct it.

Your Lordship will view, I am confident, with unmixed gratification, the happy advance to abolition of slavery in this island. I am not curious to trace the causes of this most devoutly to be wished consummation, but when compulsory labour (the Government slavery) was abolished, the blow was struck at that slavery which individual proprietors still exercised over more or less numerous dependants; and a short time will see the whole system extinguished here, I confidently hope and trust, without commotion or mischief of any kind. I shall watch its progress anxiously, and encourage the abolition by every fair means. A premature measure would be only the rash forerunner of certain failure, while the reward to the Saf-fragam chief will undoubtedly have a beneficial effect. The comparative numbers registered in 1837 and 1838 (from whatever cause the diminution may proceed) give, as your Lordship will observe with satisfaction, a direct diminution of 743.

I am, &c.

(signed) *J. A. Stewart Mackenzie.*

The Right Hon. Lord Glenelg,
&c. &c. &c.

CORRESPONDENCE ON THE SLAVE TRADE,

MEMORANDUM.

NUMBER of Slaves formally Manumitted since the last Meeting of the Legislative Council,
June 28, 1838.

	Males.	Females.	Total.
District of Jaffragam - - - - -	-	-	25
Alipoot - - - - -	1	-	1
Badulla - - - - -	-	-	1
Number of Slaves registered in 1838, under the Ordinance No. 3 of 1837:			
District of Jaffragam - - - - -	-	-	354 (a)
Alipoot - - - - -	6	3	9 (b)
Three Kerles - - - - -	9	8	17
Seven Kerles - - - - -	43	27	70
Nuwera Kalawige - - - - -	-	-	Nil.
Matele - - - - -	-	-	258
Badulla - - - - -	-	-	338 (c)
Number of Slaves, according to the latest Census of date prior to the above registration.			1,044
District of Jaffragam - - - - -	259	220	479
Alipoot - - - - -	-	-	279
Three Kerles - - - - -	-	-	Nil.
Seven Kerles - - - - -	-	-	457
Nuwera Kalawige - - - - -	-	-	Nil.
Matele - - - - -	70	70	140
Badulla - - - - -	210	222	432
			1,787

(a) Of these 39 emancipated by Doloowelle Dessave, before the last meeting of the Council,

24 by others,
1 discharged by order of Court.

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(b) Of these one emancipated by its owner.

(c) Ditto one ditto ditto.

(signed) P. E. Wodehouse, Assistant-Secretary.

(No. 143.)

Sir,

Downing-street, 24 November 1838.

I HAVE received your Despatch No. 130, of the 13th of August, transmitting a memorandum of the number of slaves formally manumitted since the meeting of the Legislative Council on the 28th of June 1838; together with other returns, apparently showing a considerable decrease in the number of slaves in the districts to which they apply. Assuming that slavery is decreasing in the same rate throughout all the districts of the island, and that such decrease is produced by manumission, I must agree with you in the feeling of gratification which you express at the advance towards its complete extinction in Ceylon. The returns are, however, too limited to enable me to form any opinion on that question. You, of course, possess some accurate information on the subject; and I observe that while you are justly desirous of promoting the certain abolition of slavery, you consider that a premature measure would induce a certain failure.

I received, not long since, a communication from your predecessor, Sir R. Wil-mot Horton, which has engaged much of my attention. I enclose a copy of his letter for your information.

25 August 1838.

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On a careful reconsideration of all the recent documents on this subject which have been transmitted to this office, and which are enumerated in the margin, I am induced to believe that slavery might be speedily extinguished in Ceylon, with little risk or difficulty. It is, indeed, alleged to be merely nominal,—a circumstance which must greatly facilitate its extinction. In the event of compensation being given to the present owners, the pecuniary value of slaves, merely in name, would be comparatively trifling. Nor is there much weight in the objection to the abolition of slavery drawn from the alleged employment of slaves in the performance of certain offices, which free persons cannot be induced to undertake. I apprehend that this is an objection which will continue to be urged so long as slavery exists; but which, on the extinction of slavery, would be proved to have been destitute of any valid foundation. It is probably because those offices have hitherto been allotted to slaves, that it is considered a disgrace to free persons to undertake them; but I cannot believe, that were the invidious distinction between the freeman and the slave abolished, it would be impracticable to obtain the services of hired servants for the performance of the offices in question. I am therefore anxious that measures should be immediately taken for effecting the entire abolition of slavery at the earliest practicable period. Adverting to the various considerations of policy connected with this question, I am unwilling to impose on you specific instructions, an adherence to which might, in your judgment, be injurious to the public interests; but I have thought it right to convey to you my deliberate opinion, that slavery may safely be terminated more rapidly than by the existing process of gradual manumission. With this view I have to request that you will transmit to me as soon as possible a full and detailed Report on the actual state of slavery in every part of the island, containing of course an account of the number of slaves now remaining in the island, and of their owners; and a statement of the nature of the occupations and employments of the slaves, and any other particulars relating to the subject, which may be material to a just and complete consideration of it. I have further to desire that you will send me an estimate of the amount of compensation which, in the event of an early and simultaneous enfranchisement, would in your opinion be required as an equitable indemnity to the owners. In preparing this estimate you will, however, for the reasons stated in former correspondence on this subject, avoid exciting the expectation that compensation will be granted. That is a question which must await your reply to this despatch; but you will observe that Sir R. W. Horton entertains no doubt, that the amount of any such compensation could easily be borne by the colonial revenue.

Having conveyed to you my general views on this subject, I shall be happy to receive from you the fullest communication with regard to it, and I shall feel great satisfaction should you be able to suggest any immediate proceeding which you think can safely be adopted, in order to effect the extinction of Slavery in Ceylon.

To the Right Hon. Stewart Mackenzie,
&c. &c. &c.

I have, &c.
(signed) *Glenelg.*

My Lord,

Brighton, 25 August 1838.

On reference to my Despatch, No. 144, of 3d October 1837, I find I have omitted to call your Lordship's attention to certain circumstances which, in my judgment, rendered it in the highest degree inexpedient to take any steps for the suppression of slavery in the Kandyan provinces, until a certain time had been suffered to elapse after the conspiracy of 1834.

In confirmation of this opinion, I beg to call your Lordship's attention to the evidence of the third Adigar Molligarde, who on his examination stated as follows:

"I have something more to state. There was news that slaves would not be allowed any longer; we all signed a petition on that subject, and presented it. On that petition being presented, Mr. Turnour said it is not good; apply to keep the slaves for a limited period. After this petition was returned, it was carried to the verandah of the Maligawa; it was debated amongst ourselves to what period it should be limited. After this, the second prisoner said, an attempt was made to abolish slavery in the Isle of France; that the inhabitants of the Isle of France rebelled

rebelled and resisted it, and disputed with those gentlemen who were sent from England; that if unanimity existed in this country, the same could be done here. After this both the first and second prisoner said, We cannot endure these things. If there are no slaves, no religion, no respect, how can all this be endured? Therefore some steps should be looked for. That the Revenue Commissioner would burn this country before he left it; when they said that he would burn it, they meant that he would destroy the country, the religion, everything; that this could not be endured, and that we must look out for something to destroy the government. Our Walapane Dessare was there also. The Adigars told him that when this was begun, he should do what was needful to be done. He agreed to it."

I have also to call your Lordship's attention to the summing up of the second Puisne Judge upon the trial, Mr. Justice Norris, at the close of the prosecution. In speaking of the grievances complained of by the Kandians, Mr. Justice Norris thus expressed himself:—

"These alleged grievances, or to speak more properly, these pleas for the continuance of privileged oppression, are threefold, and I cannot more conveniently dispose of them than in this place. The first is, the abolition of compulsory labour, and the apprehended ultimate extinction of slavery in the maritime provinces. It is almost needless to say that the first of these measures was conceived by his Majesty's Government in the noblest, most benevolent, and most enlightened spirit; was an inestimable boon to the great mass of the people, and has already been productive of the happiest effects. Nor can you have forgotten that compensation was made to those chiefs who at first suffered from the change, and that their acquiescence in the measure was publicly and gratefully expressed to his Excellency the Governor, through the mouth of the second prisoner at the bar. With regard to the apprehended abolition of slavery in the Kandian provinces, it is a question, the final settlement of which must mainly depend upon the disposition of the Kandian chiefs themselves; and let us hope that they will at no distant period be prepared to follow the noble example set them by their brethren of the maritime provinces."

To persons unaccustomed to the state of society in a country like Ceylon, such an indication of public opinion may appear to present no reason for not proceeding at once with any measure in itself deemed desirable; but in a country which has only reached a certain degree of civilization the same principle will not apply which might apply in Europe; and in such a country it is the peculiar duty, as it appears to me, of a Governor to consider well the time of bringing forward a measure opposed to the prejudices of any class of people.

In my speech to the chiefs and priests of the Kandian nation, in February 1835, I expressed myself as follows:—

"The task of a Government in a personal point of view, might be more easy if it were only to watch and wait until blood had been shed and direct acts of rebellion overtly committed. There would then be no apology necessary for exerting all its engines of power and punishment against such parts of the population as might flock to the standard of treason when once unfurled. In such a case there would be no difficulty or intricacy in proving the guilt of the offenders, but by this tardy interference the interests of a country might, and probably would, sustain the deepest prejudice; above all, the innocent would be in many instances inevitably confounded with the guilty in one common ruin. Such a crisis it is the province of good government to avert."

If the doctrine here proposed be too general, at all events I think it will not be denied by persons conversant with the condition of the country in reference to which it was peculiarly applied. But although the time of recommending a public measure may enter into the consideration of a Government, there must necessarily be a limitation of the period during which extreme caution is necessary, as explained by me in my despatch of October 1837.

During the six years of my administration of the Government of Ceylon, I never saw a slave in any part of the country whose condition, as a slave, could have been suspected from any distinctive work or occupation. I have been in houses where the servants were slaves, but they were in no ways to be distinguished from those who were not slaves.

I am not bringing forward this as an argument that slavery ought not to be abolished in Ceylon, but as an argument to show that the compensation for the loss of slaves so employed cannot involve any serious expense; and I have no reason to doubt for one moment that the revenue of Ceylon will be able to afford any

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any reasonable compensation for loss of slaves, without any claim having to be made upon the mother country, more especially if made by annual instalments.

The course which I would venture to propose to your Lordship, is to apply to the present Governor of Ceylon for a full report upon the subject, as also for a statement of the compensation which it would be just to give parties holding slave property for the emancipation of their slaves, whether in the maritime or in the Kandyan provinces, that is, if Her Majesty's Government are decided upon immediate abolition, and are not prepared to act upon any less rapid alternative, under the peculiar circumstances of the very mitigated state of slavery existing in Ceylon, more especially with reference to slavery in India, which I need not remind your Lordship was kept back in the same clause together with Ceylon, as a reserved question, at the conclusion of the Emancipation Act.

I have, &c.

To Right Hon. Lord Glenelg,
&c. &c. &c.

(signed) *R. Wilmot Horton.*

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(Presented to Parliament by Her Majesty's Command.)

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