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SLAVE TRADE. No. 3 (1876).

COMMUNICATIONS

FROM

DR. KIRK,

RESPECTING THE

SUPPRESSION OF THE LAND SLAVE TRAFFIC

IN THE

DOMINIONS

OF THE

SULTAN OF ZANZIBAR.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.
1876.

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Communications from Dr. Kirk respecting the Suppression of
the Land Slave Traffic in the Dominions of the Sultan of
Zanzibar.

No. 1.

Dr. Kirk to the Earl of Derby.—(Received June 6.)

My Lord,

Zanzibar; April 20, 1876.

IN acknowledging the receipt of my letter of the 27th July last, your Lordship was pleased to express entire approval of the course I proposed to pursue with a view to stop the land Slave Traffic, should the result of my inquiries convince me, on my return to Zanzibar, that the export trade was as large as it had been represented to be.

What is here alluded to was contained in a Report by Mr. Holmwood, the Assistant Agent, which I had the honour to submit to your Lordship with my letter above referred to. In this it was stated, as the result of careful inquiry, that as many as 32,000 slaves had passed north through Pangani during the year, and that of these at least 15,000 had found their way to the Island of Pemba.

The accuracy of Mr. Holmwood's Report being called in question by Captain Prideaux, who for the time acted in my place, it became my duty to investigate this subject on my return, and to substantiate or refute, by carefully collected information, the correctness of his statements, and generally to make myself acquainted with the present state of the Slave Trade, and the practical working of our Treaties.

The rise of the Slave Traffic with which I was now called upon to deal had been pointed out so far back as 1871, when, in my report dated 20th March of that year, I expressed an opinion that, if stopped by sea, the slave dealers would transfer their operations to the land, and that, before closing the sea traffic, steps should be taken to meet in anticipation the danger thus indicated.

The Slave Trade Treaty of 1873, which I had the honour to negotiate, had the immediate effect of practically ending the sea traffic to foreign countries, and at the same time of calling into existence the land route which I had foretold, by which the sufferings of the slaves were increased tenfold, these unfortunates being daily marched in chain-gangs along the coast, even to Lamo, beyond which the mortality became excessive, and yet a few were pushed on to the Somali country by land, by one unbroken journey of 700 miles from Kilwa.

Thus, although we had put an end to the export of slaves from this coast to Persia and Arabia, we had not ameliorated the fate of the slave, and the mortality on the new route being greater, left the depopulation of the rich and fertile lands of Central Africa to proceed at a quicker pace than before.

The first accurate information regarding this new slave route was collected by Vice-Consul Elton, acting under my orders on a mission from Zanzibar to Kilwa, towards the end of 1873. In performing this journey he, in thirty days, passed no less than 4,096 slaves being marched in gangs to the north, and from this we were led to imagine that even then an organized traffic had been established; it, however, remained doubtful how far these rates would be kept up, and whether the dealers were not working off the accumulation of slaves which we knew had taken place at Kilwa owing to the sudden stoppage of the sea traffic.

Mr. Holmwood's report of a mission to the northern dominions of Zanzibar in the latter part of 1874, when he visited the upper portion of the land route, showed, however, that, so far from this traffic being likely to stop as the stock of slaves in hand was worked off at Kilwa, it had become a systematic trade carried on with regularity, and at a profit as regarded the route up to Lamo, and, if the statistics he collected could be relied on, a worse form of Slave Trade had sprung up in the place of that we had the previous year suppressed.

Captain Prideaux, who then acted as Consul-General, reported, however, that, in his opinion, Mr. Holmwood had been entirely misled and had greatly exaggerated the state of the case. I was therefore directed by your Lordship to investigate the facts for myself and to act according to circumstances.

Mr. Holmwood in his report had asserted that of the slaves taken north by land, 15,000 had been shipped from the mainland to the Island of Pemba, which of itself would constitute a breach of the Treaty of 1873. I therefore submitted to your Lordship, in forwarding that officer's able report in my letter of July 27th, that I should on returning to my post apply myself to sift his evidence and that of the agents employed on the coast, both as to the general land traffic and the numbers being smuggled into the Island of Pemba, and if it were shown that a fractional part of the number stated by Mr. Holmwood to be taken to Pemba were so transported, I proposed to call His Highness' attention to his Treaty obligations and point out the necessity of taking steps to put an end to the land traffic through his dominions, which, although not in itself illegal, would have become so as being a means towards the shipment of slaves.

In this work, as above sketched, but acting under your Lordship's express directions, I have since my return been steadily engaged, and have made myself accurately aware, as far as is possible, regarding the leaders of slave caravans, the numbers of slaves in each, their destination, and the parties by whom money had been provided.

In this way I became fully satisfied that, while the total number of slaves marched north, of late, has not been quite so great as had been estimated by Mr. Holmwood for the previous year, a yet larger proportion than he had given were this season destined for Pemba.

I could account for and name the owners of not less than 1,000 slaves that left Kilwa by land to be introduced into that island during a succession of months, and therefore inferred that, in the year, not less than 12,000 had been taken, the probability being that many more, of whom I knew nothing, had been smuggled.

Matters of a more immediate nature delayed the action I should otherwise have taken to press this upon His Highness' attention, but as these enabled me to obtain the statutory abolition of slavery in the northern third of his dominions, and the blocking of the land route north of Lamu, this was the less to be regretted, and I lost no time, when confidence had again been established, in bringing the question in a systematic way before His Highness, by submitting a list of no less than thirty-eight offenders, whose punishment I asked, observing, as the ground for their arrest that, although ostensibly taking slaves by land, they did so in order that they might be shipped in contravention of Treaty, a statement I was now ready to prove.

To do His Highness justice, I have to state that, although he doubted at the time the accuracy of my information, on the grounds that all such reports had been concealed from him or denied by his people, and that if anything like the numbers I alleged were being taken to Pemba, our cordon of boats must surely have made more captures; the greater part of those I had indicated were seized by his orders, and I believe the result of the investigation which followed had not a little to do with giving him that confidence which he afterwards showed in the correctness of my estimates.

A second list of offenders, thirty in number, was forwarded to Bagamoyo, which had now become a sort of mart for the Pemba dealers, and many of those implicated were in consequence placed in irons.

Notwithstanding the accumulated evidence I was now bringing to bear, His Highness' evident personal anxiety to carry out his Treaty stipulations, and his readiness to punish offenders in a way that left nothing to be said, almost disarmed me from urging him at once to extremes, by denouncing him as having failed to give effect to the Treaties, and I preferred allowing the inevitable conclusion which must ensue from the policy I followed, to force itself on his mind and convince him that no half measures could be of the smallest avail, and that nothing remained, if he was to enforce his authority, but putting down with a high hand the entire land traffic.

The information gained in my investigations, together with the growing experience of the officers of Her Majesty's ship "London," whose exertions are beyond all praise, had, however, begun to bear fruit in the shape of slave captures to which I could point, for it had, I confess, seemed strange, even allowing for the facilities in crossing a narrow channel during the night, that our boats should hitherto not have made more prizes.

Already interviews had taken place at which I had forced these questions on His Highness' attention, and these had been followed by letters further pressing the

subject. It was not, however, before the 15th of April that I was enabled to place before His Highness, in a manner that seemed likely to meet with a favourable reception, my demands in a distinct and direct form.

In the letter, of which I inclose a copy, I showed that this question was one with which I was authorized to deal by your Lordship, and that had seriously occupied the attention of Her Majesty's Government, that, but for events which affected the integrity of his dominions and his continuation as an independent Ruler, I should have brought it forward in stronger terms before now, that these complications being over, we looked to him to see that the people of Pemba did not set his orders for the observance of Treaty systematically at defiance, that recent captures—especially the last with 129 slaves on board—must have convinced him of the accuracy of my information, and that, as in this case, the slave dealers had attempted to murder our officer and his men, in their endeavour to escape capture, the land traffic, which was but the first stage of the route to Pemba, had assumed an importance he could no longer ignore or decline to deal with. I showed him that the profits were so great that nothing but radical measures could be expected to succeed in stopping the trade, and that as the action taken by His Highness, at my immediate request, with regard to the dealers whom I had denounced, was proved, by an intercepted letter, to have been understood by the whole body as a total prohibition of the trade, it would be well if he now did, by public Proclamation and definite instructions to his officers, all he had received credit for from those engaged in slave dealing, and forbid, absolutely, all land traffic in slaves, the transport of slaves through his dominions, and the fitting out of slave caravans, or even their arrival from the interior.

Your Lordship will perceive that the action I here indicated far exceeded anything hitherto negotiated or attempted, and beyond the scope of all former concessions; and I was well aware that, should His Highness consent, we might be called upon to carry out your Lordship's assurance of support conveyed to him as reported in my despatch of the 15th instant.

I am happy to state, as the result of my labour carried on ever since my return from Europe, that, after mature and serious deliberation, His Highness has given his adhesion to my views, and that, being asked to draft the necessary Proclamations, I had the honour to submit to the Sultan the two here annexed—one having for its object the closing of the land route from Kilwa in such a way that the local Governors will find it necessary to see it carried out; and the other, more difficult to enforce, but which will be the most effectual step yet taken towards the abolition of the Slave Trade on this coast, and ending those annual raids which go on depopulating Central Africa and making the regeneration of those really rich lands more hopeless and far distant year by year.

It now remains to be seen how far these important concessions to British influence can be carried out by the Sultan. That he has the will to do so is evident, but it is to be remembered in this he stands alone. His people to a man are against him and simply yield to the inevitable. His Governors, ill paid, are open to other influences, and have for the most part been themselves too often engaged in the traffic to look on it as a crime.

The success, therefore, of the present step will depend on this office being kept as before thoroughly informed on all that passes on the coast, so as to show His Highness when and where pressure must be brought.

Left alone, his Governors will conceal from him the truth and again connive at the traffic; but if this agency should be as fortunate as of late in getting timely information, and the people see that the Sultan's authority will be supported, the local officers will find it too dangerous to permit its continuance.

I shall in a second Report forward the Arabic copies of the Proclamations, and further particulars as to how the orders therein have been issued, when the drafts submitted by me have been approved of by His Highness.

I have, &c.
(Signed) JOHN KIRK.

Inclosure 1 in No. 1.

Dr. Kirk to the Sultan of Zanzibar.

Zanzibar, 1876.

Sir,

I CANNOT hide from your Highness that the constant proofs of Slave Trade carried on by the people of Pemba in contravention of the Treaty of 5th June, 1873,

and in defiance of your Highness' authority, is a matter that has seriously occupied the attention of Her Majesty's Government and of Lord Derby, and on which I have received his Lordship's instructions for my guidance.

On this subject I should have addressed your Highness before, had other matters affecting the integrity of your dominions, which threatened your existence as an independent ruler, not forced such questions for the time in the background.

Happily, those difficulties are, for the present, at an end, and your Highness' authority re-established on a firmer footing than it was before; but the people of Pemba, your subjects, still continue to set aside all rules and to transport thousands of slaves from Kilwa by land to the harbours on the coast, from which they can convey them in a few hours to their estates.

Recent captures of slaves taken crossing to Pemba, especially the last with 129 slaves on board, will have convinced your Highness of the general accuracy of my former statements regarding the extent of this traffic.

The slaves in this case, as in others, had been ordered by wealthy people in Pemba, who, afraid to go themselves and incur the danger of the severe punishment now inflicted by your Highness on offenders, hire others, who for money are willing to run this risk, and who, as their agents, buy slaves with their money in Kilwa or Bagamoyo, and having taken them the first part of the way by land, transport them in dhows to Pemba.

In every case the land route from Kilwa to Pangani is only the means first used to carry out this breach of Treaty, and I cannot resist the many proofs that are forced upon me that not less than 1,000 slaves leave Kilwa every month for Pemba.

Of these few are taken by our boats, on account of the short distance from the mainland to Pemba, which usually enables vessels to cross at night.

The profits of this illicit Traffic are so great, that if the slaves are safely landed the loss of the vessel is of no importance. Thus, for instance, the vessel of Zohr bin Saeed just taken with 129 slaves, which cost 130 dollars, would have gained over 200 dollars on that single voyage, and she has, with another vessel of the same owner, been steadily engaged in the Slave Trade with Pemba for several months.

It gives me now the greatest satisfaction in pressing this subject upon your Highness, to be able to put in your hands at the same time a letter taken in this dhow, of which I shall transmit a copy to Lord Derby as independent proof that your Highness has personally been doing your utmost to put an end to the Traffic.

Your Highness will find in this letter that many of those I denounced by name as slave-dealers at Kilwa have been seized and imprisoned, and you will also perceive that there is no doubt the Governor of Kilwa has done his duty, and laid hands, as he was ordered, on those actively engaged in the Slave Trade.

The slave-dealers, you will find, believe that final orders will be given to put an end to the land traffic, their last resource, and are quite prepared to yield.

Now I would venture to submit to your Highness' very serious consideration whether at the present time, when you hold such ample proof of the manner in which your subjects at Pemba persistently set aside your authority and employ agents who do not hesitate to fire on and attempt to murder our officers and men that they may convey slaves by sea, thus giving your enemies ground for remark, and your friends just cause for complaint, it would not be politic for your Highness to do in a public manner, by Proclamation, all that the slave-dealers believe you are doing, and to prohibit the conveyance of slaves by land under pain of severe punishment to those engaged, and forfeiture of slaves and property.

A further order to prohibit the approach of slave caravans from the interior, from Nyassa and elsewhere under similar penalties, would, I feel satisfied, put an end to the constant breach of Treaty by your subjects, which has now become a matter of such magnitude that Her Majesty's Government have fully determined to interfere.

In offering this advice I can promise the full support of the British authorities and of the Government, and assure your Highness at the same time that your own good faith and earnest wish to do all that has been asked is a matter that has been often brought before Lord Derby in my Reports, and that Her Majesty's Government are fully aware of the difficult and delicate position you yourself occupy, and, whilst determined to put an end to these contraventions of the Treaty, will support your authority in taking the steps necessary thereto.

I have, &c.
(Signed) JOHN KIRK.

Inclosure 2 in No. 1.

Salim bin Suliman to Homaid bin Saeed and Suliman bin Khalfan.

(Translation.)

After compliments,

THIS letter comes from the harbour of Tanga; and, my dear friend, if you ask about Sayyid Barghash, I tell you His Highness has stopped the buying and selling of slaves at Kilwa and Bagamoyo, and imprisoned the dealers in irons; this is the news, and at Bagamoyo the agents are sending back their money.

NOTE.—Then follows reference to Slave Orders for the above parties—partly illegible.

Inclosure 3 in No. 1.

Proclamation Draft No. 1.

To all to whom it may concern of our friends on the mainland of Africa, the Island of Pemba, and elsewhere:

WHEREAS, in disobedience of our orders, and in violation of the terms of our Treaties with Great Britain, slaves are being constantly conveyed by land from Kilwa, for the purpose of being taken to the Island of Pemba, be it known, that we have determined to stop, and by this Order do prohibit, all conveyance of slaves by land under any condition, and we have instructed our Governors on the coast to seize and imprison those found disobeying this Order, and to confiscate their slaves.

Be this known, &c.

Dated

(L.S.)

Inclosure 4 in No. 1.

Proclamation Draft No. 2.

To all whom it may concern, Our friends on the mainland of Africa and elsewhere.

WHEREAS, slaves are being brought from the countries of Nyassa, Uyao, and elsewhere, to the coast, and there sold to dealers who take them to Pemba against Our orders and the terms of Treaties with Great Britain, be it known that we forbid the arrival of slave caravans from the interior, and the fitting out of slave caravans by Our subjects, and have given Our orders to Our Governors accordingly, and all slaves arriving at the coast will be confiscated.

Be this known, &c.

Dated

(L.S.)

No. 2.

Dr. Kirk to the Earl of Derby.—(Received June 6.)

(Extract.)

Zanzibar, April 28, 1876.

IN continuation of my despatch of 20th instant, reporting the successful issue of the negotiations with which I had been instructed by your Lordship for the suppression of the Land Slave Traffic, I have now the honour to forward copies of the two Proclamations as finally issued for stopping the land slave route, and the fitting out of slave hunting expeditions for the interior.

On the 21st of April I received, for perusal, the Sultan's letters of instruction to the Governors on the coast, forwarding the proclamation, and now inclose in translation the circular letter addressed to the principal local authorities, and that to the Governor of Kilwa.

I shall have copies of the notification printed in Arabic, with an English and Swahili translation, the latter in the native character understood by all classes, for

distribution on the coast, and in the interior on the line of caravan routes, and I shall take care that Mr. Young, now established on Lake Nyassa, is made aware that the slave-dealers who scour that country are liable to imprisonment, and to the confiscation of their slaves.

Your Lordship is aware that, through the preliminary action taken in this matter by me, the Slave Trade had been driven into the hands of Arabs of the lowest class, foreigners to Zanzibar, whose business it was to convey slaves from Kilwa by land, purchased with money obtained in Pemba or Lamo, and deliver them to their employers. These men who, knowing the consequences in case of detection, did not hesitate to fire on our boats when escape of their slave cargo became otherwise hopeless, are not likely tamely to submit and give up their slaves to the miserable soldiery of Seyyid Burgash, or the authority of his Governors, and as I shall now take even greater pains than before to be informed, and so force the local authorities to act, collisions on the coast are therefore almost certain. I have therefore renewed your Lordship's assurances of assistance and support from the British authorities, should the steps His Highness has taken make them necessary, and I shall see that your Lordship's assurances are carried into effect.

Inclosure 1 in No. 2.

Circular Letter to the Zanzibar Governors on the Coast forwarding Proclamations.

To the Governor of

(Translation.)

(After compliments.)

I SEND you a Proclamation which you will see posted at the Custom-house, and you will stop the arrival of slaves at your place and at all villages in its vicinity, and whoever transgresses this our order you will imprison and take possession of his slaves informing us thereof.

Dated the 24th Rabia el Awal 1293 (20th April, 1876).

This is from Barghash bin Saeed and written with his own hand.

Inclosure 2 in No. 2.

Letter forwarding two Proclamations addressed to the Governor of Kilwa.

(Translation.)

(After compliments.)

I SEND you two Proclamations which you will see posted at the Custom-house, and you will prevent the fitting out, departure, and return of slave caravans from and at Kilwa and all the places in its neighbourhood, and any one acting in disobedience to our orders you will imprison and seize his slaves, reporting to us your proceedings.

Dated 24 Rabia el Awal 1293 (20th April, 1876).

This is from Barghash bin Saeed and written by his own hand.

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*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Com-
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