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ANTI-SLAVERY DECREE

ISSUED BY

THE SULTAN OF ZANZIBAR,

DATED

AUGUST 1, 1890.

*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.
November 1890.*

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HER MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE
BY HARRISON AND SONS, ST. MARTIN'S LANE,
PRINTERS IN ORDINARY TO HER MAJESTY.

And to be purchased, either directly or through any Bookseller, from
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[C.—6211.] *Price 1d.*

Anti-Slavery Decree issued by the Sultan of Zanzibar, dated
August 1, 1890.

Colonel Euan-Smith to the Marquis of Salisbury.

(Extract.)

Zanzibar, August 3, 1890.

I HAVE the honour to inform your Lordship that the Anti-Slavery Decree, of which manuscript and printed copies, both in Arabic and English, are forwarded herewith, was promulgated by the Sultan; and copies were affixed for public information in the places usually employed for such purposes on the afternoon of the 1st instant.

His Highness also sent copies of the Decree to all the foreign Representatives in Zanzibar, accompanied by a Circular letter, of which a translation is attached to this despatch.

Before leaving His Highness on Thursday morning, the 31st ultimo, when it was agreed that the publication of the Decree should take place next day, I earnestly advised him, before its actual promulgation, to have it read over to the leading members of the Arab community, and to have its provisions and probable effects carefully explained to them. This was accordingly done in open "baraza" on Friday morning, and I am informed that the Arabs then present declared that they saw little to object to, the knowledge that their present slaves would not be taken away from them apparently giving them the greatest satisfaction.

The Decree was published late on the afternoon of the 1st instant, and on the morning of the 2nd instant the Sultan sent his officials and cleared out and closed for ever the six houses in which, as I understand, the Traffic in domestic slaves has been hitherto quietly carried on by recognized native brokers. The brokers themselves were warned against a re-exercise of their former occupation, under the pain of severe punishment.

In the evening of the same day Mr. Consul Smith quietly paid a visit to the same houses, and saw that they had really been evacuated. An official of His Highness the Sultan accompanied him.

Since His Highness has signed the Decree he has shown himself most active in doing his utmost to give full publicity and effect to its provisions in all parts of his dominions, save only the German coast-line, concerning which I do not think it part of my duty to advise him.

His Highness sent off special messengers with copies of his Decree to the Walis in Pemba and those of the ports along the entire British coast-line. The latter, however, were sent, through me, to Sir F. de Winton, with a large number of copies of the Decree in question for publication throughout the British sphere.

The Sultan's Decree has, of course, caused an immense amount of discussion among the inhabitants of Zanzibar.

Little by little, the feeling is making itself apparent among the Arabs that its provisions assure to them more than they had themselves really expected or hoped for. They are, however, beginning to understand that the entire abolition of slavery and the emancipation of all slaves must eventually be the inevitable outcome of the Decree should its provisions be strictly carried out; but they hope that such a result will not be arrived at for many years, and, in the meantime, they trust to fate to do the best that may be possible for them under the circumstances. The fear of a compulsory general emancipation has passed away for the time being, and their feeling of present relief is so great as to minimize their anxiety for the future.

The condition of the entire mass of slaves now possessed by the Arabs within the dominions of the Sultan of Zanzibar has been so immensely ameliorated by the provisions of the Decree that I can now see no reason whatever why they should any longer form objects either of compassion or of interference on the part of the many well-intentioned humanitarian Societies who have hitherto interested themselves

on their behalf. It is true that as a general rule domestic slaves are well treated by their owners; that they are regarded much as members of the family, and are reasonably well cared for; and that in this state the vast majority of them would certainly be content to remain. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that hitherto they have been exposed, even as domestic slaves, to the risk of many grave injuries and dangers.

They have had no remedy against habitual and severe ill-treatment; against being sold away at any moment (notwithstanding the order to the contrary) from their homes and families; against injustice of the grossest kind—in some cases against the infliction of death, if not upon themselves, upon the members of their families.

Their complaints and wrongs have had no chance of being heard or attended to. They have been denied *in toto* the right of obtaining their freedom. The Courts of Justice have been closed to them. Their status has been materially and morally the same as that of the ass or camel possessed by their owners.

All this is now changed. Against such risks as thus set forth, against ill-treatment, sale, or exchange, the slave is now guaranteed by the absolute right of appealing to the Sultan, with the certainty that his plaint will be heard and attended to.

The door of freedom is opened to him in more ways than one. The Courts of Justice are no longer closed. The fear of death at the caprice of an irresponsible owner is minimized. As long only as he is well treated by his Arab owner, the slaves remain with him. Ill-treatment or any attempt at his sale or exchange secures his freedom. Well treated, he can, when he has sufficient money at his command, demand the right of purchasing his liberty, and have that right confirmed and enforced by the Sultan. His whole present status and his future are, in short, entirely changed from what they were a week ago.

Add to this that the slaves may now look forward to the future emancipation of their children. At any moment, under clause 1 of the present Decree, the late Sultan's Decree, freeing all children from slavery that might be born after the first day of the current year, may be put into force. All this has been accomplished, as I believe, at a minimum of distress and loss of the Arab slave-owners. The necessity has doubtless been now imposed on them of carrying, with more extended execution, the principle that has underlain and actuated each successive step in the long battle that has been waged by Her Majesty's Government against slavery and the Slave Trade. They are now compelled, at the risk of losing all their slaves, to treat each as if he was a sentient, reasonable human being instead of an unreasoning animal. And they have, above all, been brought face to face with the fact that throughout Zanzibar domestic slavery is from henceforth as inevitably doomed now as the Slave Trade itself has been for many years past. But this knowledge and these responsibilities have not been arrived at or imposed upon them at any immediate sacrifice of all the customs, the habits, and the comforts of their lives. They will have time to teach their children what the future has in store for them, sooner or later. For themselves and their sons they can still continue (and that for some years yet to come) surrounded as in the past by the slaves who have for so long ministered to their daily wants, but whom for the future they will be compelled to make contented with their lot.

I feel, my Lord, that it is not necessary for me, in conclusion, to expatiate upon the praiseworthy action of the Sultan in consenting, after so short a reign, to publish such a Decree as that which accompanies this despatch.

The conspicuous merits of His Highness' conduct in this matter are not likely to be lost sight of by Her Majesty's Government.

I have, &c.
(Signed) C. B. EUAN-SMITH.

Inclosure 1.

Decree.

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.

THE following Decree is published by us, Seyyid Ali-bin-Saïd, Sultan of Zanzibar, and is to be made known to, and to be obeyed by, all our subjects within our dominions from this date.

1. We hereby confirm all former Decrees and Ordinances made by our predecessors against slavery and the Slave Trade, and declare that, whether such Decrees have hitherto been put in force or not, they shall for the future be binding on ourselves and on our subjects.

2. We declare that, subject to the conditions stated below, all slaves lawfully possessed on this date by our subjects shall remain with their owners as at present. Their status shall be unchanged.

3. We absolutely prohibit from this date all exchange, sale, or purchase of slaves, domestic or otherwise. There shall be no more traffic whatever in slaves of any description. Any houses heretofore kept for traffic in domestic slaves by slave-brokers shall be for ever closed, and any person found acting as a broker for the exchange or sale of slaves shall be liable, under our orders, to severe punishment, and to be deported from our dominions. Any Arab or other of our subjects hereafter found exchanging, purchasing, obtaining, or selling domestic or other slaves shall be liable under our orders to severe punishment, to deportation, and the forfeiture of all his slaves. Any house in which traffic of any kind in any description of slave may take place shall be forfeited.

4. Slaves may be inherited at the death of their owner only by the lawful children of the deceased. If the owner leaves no such children, his slaves shall, *ipso facto*, become free on the death of their owner.

5. Any Arab or other of our subjects who shall habitually ill-treat his slaves, or shall be found in the possession of raw slaves, shall be liable under our orders to severe punishment, and, in flagrant cases of cruelty, to the forfeiture of all his slaves.

6. Such of our subjects as may marry persons subject to British jurisdiction, as well as the issue of all such marriages, are hereby disabled from holding slaves, and all slaves of such of our subjects as are already so married are now declared to be free.

7. All our subjects who, once slaves, have been freed by British authority, or who have long since been freed by persons subject to British jurisdiction, are hereby disabled from holding slaves, and all slaves of such persons are now declared to be free.

All slaves who, after the date of this Decree, may lawfully obtain their freedom are for ever disqualified from holding slaves under pain of severe punishment.

8. Every slave shall be entitled, as a right, at any time henceforth to purchase his freedom at a just and reasonable tariff to be fixed by ourselves and our Arab subjects. The purchase-money on our order shall be paid by the slave to his owner before a Cadi, who shall at once furnish the slave with a paper of freedom, and such freed slaves shall receive our special protection against ill-treatment. This protection shall also be specially extended to all slaves who may gain their freedom under any of the provisions of this Decree.

9. From the date of this Decree every slave shall have the same rights as any of our other subjects who are not slaves to bring and prosecute any complaints or claims before our Cadis.

Given under our hand and seal this 15th day of El Hej, 1307 (1st August, A.D. 1890), at Zanzibar.

(Signed) ALI-BIN-SAÏD, *Sultan of Zanzibar.*
(Seal.)

Inclosure 2.

The Sultan of Zanzibar to Colonel Euan-Smith.

(Translation.)

(After compliments.)

Zanzibar, August 1, 1890.

WE desire to inform you, my friend, that for a long time we have had in our mind the question of the slavery that exists in our dominions, and what we could reasonably do with regard to it. And now, my friend, we have decided to issue a Decree which shall be binding upon all our subjects throughout our dominions, and we send copies in Arabic and English of such Decree herewith for your information, and with the request that you will be good enough to communicate its contents to your high Government.

ANTI-SLAVERY DECREE issued by the Sultan of
Zanzibar, dated August 1, 1890.

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mand of Her Majesty. November 1890.*
