

officers who have served in those regions, and he believes that as many as five thousand men, women and children have been carried into Arabia for sale, annually, during the last five years.⁴

But of necessity, in a country where there is no official census and where the major part of the population is shifting, wandering, nomad tribes, figures cannot be accurate. However, the fact will not be gainsaid that today slavery exists on a large scale in Arabia; slaves are an intimate part of every household with any financial standing; slaves are bought and sold. Slavery is accepted as an institution, and it is vitally interwoven with the political, religious and social life of the country.

It is slavery in the Persian Gulf in which we are most interested in our present study. However, it is impossible to consider the situation in the Gulf without studying also the situation in the rest of Arabia, where it is much the same, and in contiguous countries, especially Abyssinia, from which the bulk of the slaves come. The law of supply and demand works here as in other phases and departments of life. As long as the demand for slaves from Arabia is so insistent, so long will the slave traders be emboldened to risk much to supply them for high prices. As long as there is a supply, so long will the Arabs find them indispensable.

"The simple wish to use the bodily powers of another person as a means of ministering to one's own ease or pleasure is doubtless the foundation of slavery, and is as old as human nature."⁵

Aristotle maintained that slavery is based on nature, and that certain races are meant to be subject.

"The greatest of all divisions, that between freeman and slave, appears as soon as a barbaric warrior spares the life of his enemy when he has him down, and brings him home to drudge for him and till the soil."⁶

Such seems to be the origin of slavery in Arabia.

"This practice originated as a result of warfare and conquest. Under Islamic law, unbelievers who commit an act of aggression against the Muslims are offered upon the outbreak of the resulting

⁴ "Slavery," by Lady Kathleen Simon, p. 59.

⁵ "Ancient Law," Maine, p. 104.

⁶ "Anthropology," Tyler, p. 434, ff; Hastings, "D.B." Vol. 4, p. 461.

hostilities the alternatives of embracing Islam, of paying tribute and retaining their own religion and property, or of fighting to the death. Under the second of these conditions, the destitute enemies of the Islamic State were often enslaved in default of paying their tribute. The legality of this is doubtful. Under the third condition they were often captured and enslaved instead of being massacred."⁷

From the possession of slaves as the lawful spoils of war it is an easy step to the purchase of slaves, and then on to slave raiding and slave trading, though these are not legal in Islam. But be that as it may, Mohammed found himself in a world where slavery was already established. He found it an existing institution, both amongst the Jews and the idolaters of Arabia. He recognized it and legislated for it.

Just what attitude the Prophet took to the existing slavery is a matter of dispute. There are those who claim that Mohammed looked upon the institution as one of only temporary character, especially Moslem apologists such as Syed Ameer Ali. He writes:

"The Islamic teachings dealt a blow at the institution of slavery which, had it not been for the deep root it had taken among the surrounding nations, and the natural obliquity of the human mind, would have been completely extinguished as soon as the generation which then practiced it had passed away."⁸

On the other hand, here is another view:

"Just as Greece and Rome deemed slavery sufficiently sanctioned by Law of Nature, so the Musulmans, taking their cue from the Prophet, have rarely discerned in it an immoral or irreligious element. . . . History tells of no general movement against this institution in any Mohammedan country."⁹

"Slavery is in complete harmony with the Spirit of Islam whilst it is abhorrent to that of Christianity. That Mohammed ameliorated the condition of the slave as it existed under the heathen laws of Arabia we cannot doubt, but it is equally certain that the Arabian legislator intended it to be a perpetual institution."¹⁰

Note a few of the traditions relating to the action of the Prophet in regard to slavery. Imam ibn Husain tells of a man who at his death freed six slaves, his only property. The Prophet called the slaves together, cast lots, freed two

⁷ "The Holy Cities of Arabia," Vol. II, Eldon Rutter, pp. 90-94.

⁸ "The Spirit of Islam," Ameer Ali, p. 262.

⁹ "The Influence of Islam," by Rev. E. J. Bolus, p. 121.

¹⁰ "Notes on Mohammedanism," Hughes, p. 135.

of them and returned the other four to slavery, speaking severely of the act of freeing them all. And Jabir mentions the fact that in the days of the Prophet they used to sell a mother with children, but when Omar became Khalifa he forbade the practice.¹¹

"But, and this is an all-important point—the Prophet wrought his manly utmost to mitigate the ill-effects of slavery; it flourished exceedingly, as every schoolboy knows, long before his time, and in other countries besides his own; but, thanks to Mohammed's laws, the lot of the slaves of Islam was, and is still, immensely happier than was ever that of the slaves of pagan Rome or of Christian North America."¹²

"Whether the Prophet of Islam could have abolished slavery altogether among his followers is very doubtful; and his prescriptions regarding the just and humane treatment of this unfortunate class, taken all in all, are praiseworthy. On the other hand there is nothing whatever in Islam that tends to the abolition of this curse."¹³

As Sir William Muir has well said: "Rather, while lightening, he riveted the fetter There is no obligation on a Moslem to release his slaves."¹⁴

Whence do the slaves come? Where are they recruited? In the eleventh century, slaves, concubines and eunuchs destined for the harems in Arabia were imported into the Maghrib and Egypt by way of Spain from Scandinavia, and from the Slavonic peoples "whose name still bears witness to the rôle they played in the civilized world and especially the Islamic countries." In the thirteenth century Arabia received slaves from Europe by way of Constantinople¹⁵ whence also in more modern times we find slaves coming from the Caucasus. However, these cost four or five times as much as the black slaves, so naturally their number is small. The boys became house servants and the women concubines.¹⁶ Very clearly the lighter strain comes out even in the good Arab families today, in the children with fair hair and blue eyes.

C. Snouck Hurgronje, who himself lived in Mecca as a Moslem, wrote:

¹¹ "Mishkat," Bk. xiii, Chap. xx, Pt. 1.

¹² "With the Pilgrims to Mecca," Sparroy. Appendix by Wilfrid. p. 303.

¹³ "The Social Laws of the Koran," Roberts, p. 53.

¹⁴ "The Koran: Its Composition and Teaching," Sir Wm. Muir, p. 58.

¹⁵ "The Legacy of Islam," Arnold and Guillaume, p. 101.

¹⁶ "Mecca," C. S. Hurgronje, p. 10.

"It may seem incredible to many, and yet it is true, that the Mekka slave market gets occasionally small consignments of slaves from the British and Dutch East Indies. The slaves who are Dutch subjects would doubtless be mostly from the heathen districts of Celebes or Borneo or from the island of Nias Of young slaveboys from Hindustan I saw many, and also I saw four freshly imported British Indian slave-women."¹⁷

"I noticed that Chinese female slaves were not seldom imported into the Holy City from Singapore."¹⁸

That this practice is continued today is evident from the investigations of the Slavery Commission.

"The Temporary Slavery Commission is informed on authority which it regards as entirely trustworthy that many of the slaves of foreign origin in the Hedjaz are either young girls from the Far East who come as pilgrims, or are smuggled for sale, or are persons coming from various countries accompanying their parents or masters in the pilgrimage to Mecca."¹⁹

An attempt is being made to check this evil by an insistence on more stringent passport regulations and the suggestion that young people and children be prohibited from coming on the pilgrimage. But the pilgrimage is a religious duty of Islam. Does it seem likely that either of these recommendations will take effect?

From several sources there comes the suggestion that parents sell their own children into slavery, parents in the Yemen, in Mecca and parents coming on the pilgrimage.²⁰ It is generally known that that practice is common in China. We are surprised to learn that it is true, even though on a very small scale, in Arabia.

Also, it is little known that in Arabia, in Mecca and in Yemen, as well as in Abyssinia, corps of slave women and slave men are maintained, and are bred like cattle in order that their children may swell the slave market.²¹ Each woman when she produces a child receives a special reward. Her pregnancy cannot be considered an excuse for stopping work "until the actual day of her delivery and she resumes it almost immediately afterwards." These facts were cor-

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 15.

¹⁸ Hurgronje: "Ein Arabischer Beleg zum heutigen Sklavenhandel in Singapore in de Zeitschr. d. Deutsch. Morgenl. Gesel. xlv, pp. 395-402.

¹⁹ Report of Temporary Slavery Commission, July 13 to 25, 1925, Chap. iii, Art. 44.

²⁰ "The Holy Cities of Arabia," Vol. II, Rutter, p. 113; Negro Year Book, 1931-1932, p. 424.

²¹ "The Holy Cities of Arabia," Vol. II, Rutter, p. 93; Negro Year Book, 1931-1932, p. 424.

roborated by the investigations and careful inquiry of *Le Matin* in 1929, and also by the report of M. Mareil Griaule to the International Labour Organization of Geneva.²² It was this practice of the stock rearing of slaves that helped convince the Maharajah of Nepal that his country could make no progress so long as the system was countenanced. He explained to the slave owners that if the amount of money invested in a woman slave for the breeding of children were invested in industry, the return would be larger.

But by far the largest number of slaves in Arabia and along the Persian Gulf today are of African origin—black men from Nubia and the Sudan, who being strongest are used for the heaviest work, and Abyssinians in all hues from yellow to dark brown, who become concubines and household servants. However, according to the League of Nations report, slavery in the northern provinces of the Sudan is moribund, and in the extreme south no slave-owning communities exist. Although in some of the central provinces, “notably Kordufan and Kassala, the progress of manumission has not been so rapid as might have been desired,”²³ yet Arabia can no longer look to the Sudan as her source of slaves. This is also due to the fact that in the Sudan today there is taking place an economic development in the form of a cotton-growing industry, which is bound to affect the slave-owners and the slaves.

In Abyssinia, on the other hand, we still find slavery flourishing. The Slavery Commission Report bears witness to that fact, as do also British government documents, travelers and Naval officers in the Red Sea.²⁴

And again we turn to the Slavery Commission report:

“There is reliable evidence of recent date that many thousands of slaves (an estimate that appears to be trustworthy says ten thousand) are brought by Abyssinian traders to the northwestern district, where slaves are purchasable at any time in the markets.”²⁵

Lady Kathleen Simon, in her book on Slavery, describes

²² “The Holy Cities of Arabia,” Vol. II, Rutter, p. 113; *The Contemporary Review*, Sept., 1932: “Slavery: World Abolition.”

²³ Report of Temporary Slavery Commission. Sudan No. I (1927).

²⁴ Despatch from the Gov. Gen'l. of the Sudan to the Secy. to the League, Apr. 12, 1927.

²⁵ *Westminster Gazette*, Jan. 18, 19, 20, 1922. Reproduced in *Living Age*, Mar. 4, 1932.

²⁶ Report of Temporary Slavery Commission, July 13 to 25, 1925, p. 104.

very vividly the horrors of slave-raiding. She quotes Commander Woodward (Royal Navy, Retired), at one time commanding H.M. Sloop *Clematis*, speaking of the slave trader "who has his spies and agents all over the Hinterland of the Sudan, of Arabia, and the desolate regions at the back of Italian Eritrea and French Somaliland."

"His armed column swoops one night on a village, and the entire saleable population, men, women and children, is carried off in chains. For days they are marched towards the coast, through Abyssinia and French Somaliland, right into the streets of Tajoura and Obok, and there shipped in dhows and carried across the straits of Perim to Southern Arabia."²⁶

Other methods there are of recruiting slaves. Sporadic kidnapping is very prevalent. With difficulty the government officials are able to detect caravans of slaves; it is a very simple matter for slavers to carry on their nefarious business of kidnapping one or two young girls as they go out for fuel or water.²⁷ Captain Colcomb says the black men "were at the mercy of the Arab or negro sportsman, and sold themselves, were shot down, netted, decoyed, speared, bought or kidnapped, without the intervention of any game laws or regulations for the preservation of the breed."²⁸

Side by side with this we see the picture painted by Dr. Dyce Sharp and Major Darley, two former British officials.

"Gangs of slaves, marching in misery, the men chained together in rows, and the women and children dragging themselves along beside the main body, can be seen by any traveler in Southern Abyssinia today. Some of these slaves are captured in Abyssinia territory, others in British East Africa, others in the Anglo-Egyptian Soudan."²⁹

But we are happy in the fact that these caravans are now much reduced in size, because of the efforts of England, and because of the pressure brought to bear upon the Emperor of Abyssinia by the League of Nations. That country was admitted into the League in 1923 on condition that slavery be abolished.

But even in recent years Europeans have seen caravans of as many as fifty frightfully emaciated boys. And there

²⁶ "Slavery," by Lady Kathleen Simon, p. 59.

²⁷ *The Contemporary Review*, Sept. 1932: "Slavery: World Abolition."

²⁸ "The Persian Gulf," Wilson. Quoted from Capt. R. N. Colcomb.

²⁹ *Westminster Gazette*, Jan. 1922.

are instances of their hearing caravans pass in the night, hearing shots, and the next morning finding what the hyenas had left of the bodies of women who had been shot, presumably because they tried to attract the attention of passers-by.³⁰

Ida Treat has made a special study of slavery in Abyssinia and Arabia, and from her article in a recent number of *Travel* we find that she considers that in Abyssinia slavery has received its death blow, because of the increasing efforts and influence of the Negus.³¹

It used to be that the time of the traffic was the period of the southwest monsoon, from May to September, and there was as a rule only one "journey each way annually,"³² but now slaves are carried at every opportunity, usually in small dhows, mere boats, the largest not over three hundred and fifty tons.

As for the treatment of slaves en route, Captain Colcomb gives us the following picture:

"Except that they are more crowded, I have not perceived that the condition of the slave in transit across the Arabian Sea is very different from that of his master. . . . But on the other hand the crowding in so small a space is a crying evil. . . . We must not suppose crowding, by itself, affects the negro as it does a European But, if disease, want and crowding come together, then, God help the wretched items in that crowd."³³

In the old days, Zanzibar, Juba and Brava were some of the chief ports of export of slaves from Africa,³⁴ while Muscat and Sur in Arabia were the principal ports to which they came and then were passed up to cities on the Western littoral of Arabia, up to Mesopotamia, Turkey, Persia and India. But that was when vigilance was not maintained so well as it is today. Now the traders take the shortest crossing across the Red Sea, making the trip in only a few hours, landing at Hodeida, though that cannot be considered a central depot for the disposition of slaves. Hodeida is the chief coast town of the Yemen,

³⁰ *The Contemporary Review*, June, 1932: "Slavery in Abyssinia," Lord Noel Buxton.

³¹ *Travel*, June, 1931, p. 32: "With the Slave Traders of Abyssinia," Ida Treat.

³² "The Persian Gulf," Wilson, p. 215.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 226.

³⁴ *Ibid*, p. 215; "Arabia, the Cradle of Islam," Zwemer, p. 85.

whence a great many slaves come to be escorted northward to Mecca.³⁵

Mecca, the holy city of Islam, the city towards which millions of Moslems face five times a day in prayer, the city to which thousands make pilgrimage, has become the center of the slave-trade of the world. "Why," said Doughty, "have they [Christian governments] no Residents for the police of nations in Mecca? Why have they not occupied the direful city in the name of the health of nations, in the name of the common religion of humanity, and because the head of the slave trade is there?"³⁶

Of that slave market we have several vivid descriptions. It is but a stone's throw from the "house of God." It is a very narrow street with benches of stone along the sides of the tall buildings which keep out the light.³⁷

"A Modern Pilgrim to Mecca" found that the price of female slaves varied from £20 to £100. He writes:

"The behaviour of the girls when undergoing the ordeal of inspection is what might be expected. The younger ones blush and giggle, and pretend to hide their faces. When the customers being shown around are also young and inclined to be facetious, they are quite capable of joining in the fun. The old and ugly, who have long despaired of finding a purchaser, sit forlorn and miserable, gazing dully in front of them. . . . The one idea of every slave in the market is to find a buyer as soon as possible."³⁸

Says C. Snouck Hurgronje:

"He who enters this hall with European conceptions and perhaps with recollections of Uncle Tom's Cabin in his head will at once get an unpleasant impression and will leave inwardly disgusted. The first impression is, however, false. . . . What impresses us most unpleasantly is the examining and feeling of the human merchandise as if in a cattle market, especially when it is a young woman. From closer inquiry, however, it results that no female slave (not to speak of males) feels more dislike of such overhauling than a European lady of a medical examination."³⁹

And yet, Eldon Rutter adds, "I was looking with the uneasy feeling of one who commits an outrage against

³⁵ *Travel*, June, 1931, p. 32.

³⁶ "Travels in Arabian Deserts," II, Doughty, p. 53.

³⁷ "The Holy Cities of Arabia," Vol. I, p. 33, Rutter.

³⁸ "A Modern Pilgrim in Mecca," Wavell, p. 143.

³⁹ "Mekka," Hurgronje, p. 14.