

SLAVE-TRADE IN THE MAURITIUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Mauritius, July 23.

SIR,—I take the liberty of sending you the *Mauritius Gazette* of the 17th inst., containing a proclamation of the acting Governor, Major-General Darling, and which I think you will readily allow to be inserted in your paper. The following particulars may serve to explain the grounds on which the Major-General appears to have acted; and the few other facts added to it are of such importance to the cause of humanity, as regards the slave-trade, that they cannot fail to create general interest.

The moment Major-General Hall quitted the colony, shoals of small craft were sent out for slaves to Madagascar, Mosambique, and elsewhere. They have gradually returned, and gone out again; and it is admitted by every one here, that at no former period the slave-trade was so brisk as it is at this moment. At the lowest computation, the number of new slaves imported within the last month exceeds 700! And the persons directly engaged, or otherwise interested in this inhuman traffic (which in fact comprises the whole population), have increased in activity and daring beyond any precedent. Not long ago a military guard, consisting of a corporal and four men, conveying to town 110 blacks seized by them, and who had just been landed, were attacked on the road by a body of men, who rushed on them from a wood; the greater number of the blacks were rescued, and only 24 remained in the possession of the soldiers; in the scuffle one or two of the assailants were wounded, but as usual none of the offenders were discovered. The soldiers even were declared to have acted illegally in presuming to seize these blacks.

Within the last three weeks a vessel was taken by one of the boats belonging to the *Liverpool* frigate, from which 200 or 250 blacks had just been landed; (the Master, and several others concerned, I think 15 in number, will within a few days be sent to England for trial;) of these a certain number were marched during the night through Port Louis, escorted by a body of armed men—Creoles, whites and black: they were spoken with by one of the subordinates of the police; it was known where they went to, yet they were not found!

No wonder, then, that Major-General Darling should at last have been led to issue the proclamation alluded to. It affords, too, the best justification of Major-General Hall's measures, to which Major-general Darling finds himself thus compelled to revert.

What the proclamation says, that "no one will assist in bringing to justice the offenders, while but too many are ready to protect and to conceal them," is most lamentably and disgracefully true.

The following is a fact publicly notorious—that there is not one single instance of a slave-dealer having been condemned here, however flagrant the case, however clearly proved. And the several cases sent in appeal from the decisions of Mr. Smith, the judge of the Vice Admiralty Court, should they come before the public, it will be seen that uniformly even the *ex officio* prosecutor in these slave cases has been personally condemned in costs, and otherwise harassed; while the dealers, and those further interested in that nefarious traffic, have been screened and favoured in various ways.

These appeals will thence speak for themselves, and in the honourable and able hands of Sir W. Scott, justice will be done to the injured: while the following case may serve as a further illustration of the manner in which legal proceedings are carried on in this colony against slave-dealers and their employers:—

CASE.

In the month of August, 1818, the schooner *Le Voyageur*, owned and commanded by ———, landed at Trou d'Eau Douce, a retired bay in the Flacq district, about 60 Malays, chiefly women and girls. This vessel had been for some months expected, as information of her previous equipment and sailing had been given by a slave named Troptard, belonging to Madame Terau, an inhabitant of Flacq, whose son was on board. Troptard was instructed to be on the look out, and when the vessel arrived, to acquaint the officer commanding at Flacq. He neglected to do so, but gave information to Sergeant Caffy, of the 56th Regiment, stationed at a post near to him. The Sergeant, led by the slave, proceeded to a wood where Madame Terau was found conducting a number of newly landed slaves to a place of concealment. At the sight of the Sergeant she dispersed them, and as it was night many escaped, but seven were secured. A private of the 56th Regiment, bearer of the report to General Hall of what had happened, fell in with another party of these slaves on the road to Port Louis, and although he made no attempt to seize them, one of their conductors attacked and severely wounded him with a dagger.

The collector of the customs was sent to Flacq, to search for the remainder of these slaves, but he only succeeded in finding one of them, a Malay woman, near the spot where the soldier had been wounded. It was gathered from Troptard, that the cargo had been divided into small lots, and distributed among different plantations for their greater concealment. The schooner had made off, but the master remained at the Mauritius. A warrant for his apprehension was issued by Mr. Caunter, then Judge of the Admiralty Court, but he was not laid hold of. The eight slaves seized were found all to be Malays, and from their testimony it appeared, that they had been carried off from one of the Malay Islands. Their village, as they stated, had been surprised and burnt by the crew of *Le Voyageur*, and their brutal treatment of the women during the passage is too shocking to be described. It was soon known that the *Voyageur* had arrived at Bourbon. The

Magicienne frigate, Capt. Purvis, went down there; but on her appearing in sight the master with his crew jumped into a boat and got on shore. The vessel and all her papers were seized, and the latter afforded ample proof for her condemnation by Mr. Smith, Judge of the Admiralty Court; he has also condemned the eight Malays. In the course of the two first months of 1819, the master of *Le Voyageur* returned to the Mauritius, but the warrant for his arrestation has been either cancelled or not acted upon, and no notice has been taken either of him or any other of the persons implicated with him. Madame Terau although prosecuted for the pecuniary penalties by General Hall's orders, has not been condemned in them. Poor Troptard is the only unfortunate sufferer, he has been in strict confinement since December, 1818, and is now intended to be transported to Batavia, leaving here his wife and children.

This surely requires no comment; many other cases of similar tendency can be produced; this was selected on account of the double crime it exhibits of piracy as well as slave-dealing.

I am, Sir, your humble servant,

AN ENEMY TO SLAVE DEALERS.

PROCLAMATION.

IN THE NAME OF HIS MAJESTY GEORGE III. OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND, KING, MAJOR-GENERAL RALPH DARLING, COMMANDING IN THE ISLAND OF MAURITIUS, &c.

The Major-General commanding had encouraged the hope, from the anxiety he had manifested for the prosperity of the colony and the welfare of its inhabitants, that he should have found a corresponding disposition on the part of every class of his Majesty's subjects to promote the laudable and beneficent views of Government.

The Major-General regrets his disappointment in this just and reasonable expectation, certain individuals having carried their disobedience of the laws to an extent which calls for the prompt interference of the Government, in order to prevent, by legal but severe measures, those daily violations, which, though public and notorious, no one will assist in bringing to justice, and but too many are ready to protect and conceal. The inhabitants, therefore, who, as good subjects, should unite in putting a stop to the slave-trade, which is carrying on at this moment with a vigour as peculiar to this island as it is disgraceful to the station which it fills in the civilized world, cannot be surprised that the adoption of any measure, which may hold out a prospect of efficiency for the object it has in view, can no longer be influenced by any consideration of inconvenience to the community at large. The restraint which was lately removed from the fishery, out of consideration to the inhabitants, will be again immediately enforced.

New negroes in considerable numbers have lately been smuggled into the island, through the means of the fishermen. These men, on the Major-General's arrival, implored the Government to remove the restrictions which had been imposed on the exercise of their occupation. Naturally relying that an indulgence thus anxiously solicited would not be abused, the Major-General, as a proof of his confidence, at once complied with their wishes, and restored to them the full and unrestrained exercise of their employment.

It could hardly be supposed that this indulgence would have been perverted to the worst purposes. The fact, however, is indisputable; and those who have acted thus must take the consequences.

Every one of these men, who, through the indulgence of the Government, has been permitted to establish himself on the "Pays Geometriques," shall be removed, as that situation affords facilities to the slave trade which their cupidity cannot withstand.

There are others in the enjoyment of still more extensive indulgences, who, there is reason to apprehend, lend themselves to this traffic. They may be assured, that no consideration shall screen them from the just indignation of Government, and that its favour shall be instantly withdrawn from those who shall be found, even in the most remote degree, encouraging or countenancing it.

The Major-General, to convince them how hopeless and ruinous their cause is, and as a means of bringing them to a sense of their duty, takes this opportunity of announcing his intention of immediately increasing the military detachments on the coast, and of establishing posts on every point where a landing of slaves shall in future be permitted. The neighbouring proprietors can prevent it, and if they do not, they must abide the consequences.

The Major-General would be glad if this warning should have the effect of awakening the deluded to a sense of their situation; the example of Philibert, Tregosse, and Clerensac, who were sent to England last year, and have been sentenced to three years' confinement and hard labour, should be sufficient to deter even the most determined. Those who still persevere cannot long escape its justice, as Government will never relax in its exertions, until they have been brought to that punishment which the law has attached to their crimes, and which will be ensured by the transmission of every culprit to England.

The Major-General Commanding has in consequence been pleased to order, and it is hereby ordered accordingly.—

Art. 1.—The proclamation of the 25th February, 1819, is repealed; and the proclamation of the 1st May, 1818, is declared to be again in full force from this date.

Art. 2.—The present proclamation shall be read and entered on the records of the courts and tribunals of this island; and an official copy shall be addressed to his Honour the Chief Judge and Commissary of Justice.

Port Louis, Island of Mauritius, this 16th day of July, 1819.

R. DARLING, Major-General Commanding.

By order, A. W. BLANE, Dep. Sec. to Government.