

S P E E C H

OF THE

RIGHT HON. LORD BROUGHAM

ON THE

LIABILITIES OF BRITISH SUBJECTS,

TO THE PENALTIES OF THE LAW,

FOR

HOLDING AND TRAFFICKING IN SLAVES,

IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES;

AND ON

SLAVERY

IN

BRITISH INDIA.

DELIVERED IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS, 5TH OCTOBER, 1841.

WITH ILLUSTRATIVE NOTES.

LONDON:

THOMAS WARD AND CO., PATERNOSTER ROW;

AND TO BE HAD AT THE OFFICE OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN ANTI-SLAVERY
SOCIETY, 27, NEW BROAD STREET.

1841.

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NOTE.

As it is believed that not a few British subjects have been led unwittingly to invest capital in certain speculations, which capital has been, to a very considerable extent, appropriated to the purchase of slaves for working Plantations, and Mines in foreign countries, whereby the plainest dictates of humanity and religion, as well as the laws of the land have been grossly violated, and the slave-trade and slavery sustained and strengthened; such persons are earnestly entreated, not less to avoid the penalties of the law, than to purge themselves from the guilt of such transactions, to take steps to secure the immediate and complete emancipation of the slaves thus illegally procured, by their agents or representatives.

K
Foxwell.
18254

S P E E C H, &c.

LORD BROUGHAM.—I rise to call the attention of your lordships to a subject of very great importance, and upon which, as there happily exists no difference of opinion either in this or the other House of Parliament,—and as there prevails, indeed, a singular unanimity regarding it in every part of the country,—it will be the less necessary for me to trouble you at any considerable length. The subject to which I refer is the slave-trade and slavery. I believe that there exists in no part of either House of Parliament, or of the community, any description of persons who feel any but the strongest desire to see this most execrable traffic universally and instantly destroyed; and also to see the state of personal slavery itself as universally, and with all practicable expedition, extinguished. The ground upon which I deem it necessary to trouble your lordships, upon the present occasion, is, that great misapprehension has, apparently, gone forth, touching the state of the law with respect to the slave-trade as it at present stands. I presented a petition to your lordships, some ten or twelve days ago, which contained a variety of important allegations upon this matter. I then distinctly stated that the responsibility for the truth of those allegations must, of course, rest with the respectable petitioners who brought the subject before the House; but that, if the facts which they stated turned out to be true, it would follow that, to a large amount, the capital of this country was embarked not only in continuing slavery in foreign countries, but actually in upholding, and even extending, the slave-trade itself. I thought it expedient, in going over the different statements which that petition contained, to specify those dealings which I understood, from the best attention I could give the subject, to be not contrary to the existing law—those dealings which I conceived to be of a doubtful character—and those which are clearly and distinctly prohibited—some of the statements describing acts as having been done, and as still doing by British subjects, which acts, without any doubt whatever, are prohibited by the laws of this country.

I shall begin with the last class of these dealings, namely, those alleged to have been entered into by British subjects, and which are clearly quite illegal. The law is, that any British subject, in any part of the world, whether in a country where the slave-trade is lawful, or in a country where the slave-trade is not only allowed, but protected and even encouraged by the law,—if, except on some savage coast, there be such a country,—the slave-trade, if engaged in by a British subject, is, in that person, illegal—a felony and piracy, punishable with transportation for life, if committed on the high seas, or within the jurisdiction of the Admiralty; punishable with transportation for fourteen years if committed in any place out of the Admiralty jurisdiction. For several years the offence of slave-trading, if committed within the Admiralty jurisdiction, was a capital felony; but, by an act passed four years ago, it has been reduced to transportation for life; though it is still piracy as well as felony. If committed elsewhere, by a British subject, though in a colony or a country where slave-trading is ever so much permitted, and even favoured by the law of the place, it is a felony in that British subject; he is liable to be tried, if taken and brought to a settlement of the British crown, or if taken and brought into this country, he is liable to be tried for that act of slave-trading, as if it had been committed in the county of Middlesex; and, on being convicted, he is liable to be transported as a felon for fourteen years. Having distinctly stated this, I trust I shall not again hear my opinion cited, to show that it

depends on the law of the foreign country where a British subject resides and commits the act, whether he be guilty of felony or not; whereas I have always expressly stated, that the law of the foreign country is utterly immaterial as regards British subjects; and it is equally certain, no doubt, that if a foreigner commits an act of slave-trading within any of our dominions or settlements, he is also liable to be dealt with as a felon, and transported for life or for fourteen years, according as he may have committed the offence within or without the Admiralty jurisdiction. The only question that can ever arise is, whether any given act amounts to slave-trading or not. Now, several of the acts described in the petition do not, as it appears to me, amount to slave-trading; some of them appear of a doubtful character; others appear quite clearly to be slave-trading, and to come within the provisions of the abolition law. If a person fits out a vessel to traffic with a slave factory, and if he sells goods to that slave factory, although these goods may be used in the slave-trade—although they may be of such a kind as can either be used for the slave-trade, or for the innocent commerce of Africa—if they are sold out and out for a price. I do not think that this amounts to slave-trading. Whether it be a commendable use of capital is an entirely different question—whether it be a kind of trade which one would wish to be engaged in, or could approve of on those who drive it, is another matter; but, as regards the law of this country, it does not appear to me to be slave-trading within the meaning of the Abolition Acts. If the goods sent are of such a description that it is by no means doubtful whether they are to be used in slave-trading or not;—if, for instance, a cargo of fetters and shackles be sent out to a slave factory, or any other article which can only be used in the slave-trade, this may be more questionable;—but I am not prepared to say that even this is an act of slave trading which would make the exporter liable to a charge of felony: it appears to me to be, as the law now stands, of a doubtful description. But, if either one kind of goods or the other—either goods that may be used indiscriminately in the innocent and in the guilty commerce, or goods that must needs be intended to be used in the slave-trade by the slave factory to which they are exported—are bargained to be paid for in a price, to depend on the slave traffic, as the petition asserts they are, in many instances,—then I state my opinion, it is of little importance, but, for myself, it is fit I should state it, that this is an act of slave-trading, being a partnership with the slave-trade, and that the person exporting such goods, upon such contract, is guilty of felony, within the meaning of the English abolition laws.

Now, there is another and much more important description of dealing, because much more extensive in its application, to which I entreat the attention of your lordships and of her Majesty's government, that is, the act of holding property in a foreign settlement, which is to be cultivated or worked—cultivated in the case of a plantation, or worked in the case of a mine—by slave labour, and, in consequence of holding such property, being concerned in the purchase or sale of slaves, with a view to cultivate the plantation or to work the mine. Upon this kind of dealing, the question arises, do the abolition acts affect it or not?—Is the ownership of such property, and the management of it by buying and selling slaves, within those acts or not? My lords, this is a matter of very great importance; because it appears, though I do not see how or whence the doubt has arisen,—but I should rather say how the confident opinion is entertained, that this is a dealing in slavery and slaves, to which the abolition law does not apply. That some such opinion is generally prevalent, seems clear, for it has been acted upon by a number of most respectable individuals, and acted upon to a great extent. It has led to their engaging in a variety of important transactions,—it has induced them to invest their capital to a large amount in foreign settlements,—it has encouraged some to purchase and work the slave concerns, others to lend their capital to those who work them. These respectable parties never would have thought of such transactions, had they not been well assured of their legality; and yet, when your lordships come to consider

the provisions of the law, and how it bears upon such dealings, I hardly think I have a right to express a doubt that you will be under the necessity of holding them to be illegal. The acting or dealing on which the question arises, is this:—we are not speaking of holding slave property; that of itself is nothing; for the emancipation act of 1833, did not prohibit British subjects from holding slaves in foreign settlements in the same way that the Abolition Act had prohibited British subjects from slave-trading in foreign settlements; the measures were, in this respect, differently framed, consequently, after the act of 1833, and even after the *final period of emancipation*, 1840, it was lawful for a British subject to have property in slaves in a foreign settlement. But the question is this:—Has it been lawful since the Abolition Law—meaning, of course, the law abolishing the slave-trade,—has it been lawful for a British subject to purchase slaves, voluntarily to make himself the holder of slaves, to buy slaves or to sell slaves, in a foreign country? The question arises upon the legality of that act, I have been represented as having said—I must have been so represented, because I have received one or two letters probably from persons engaged in these transactions, or whose friends are so engaged, and who are desirous of knowing if it be true, that I had no doubt, that such dealing was lawful, and was not struck at by the abolition law. Now, in presenting the petition, I carefully abstained from saying any such thing—I most carefully abstained from giving any such opinion. I could not have given any such opinion; because if called on to say whether it was lawful or not, my opinion certainly was, that it is illegal. I do not say it is a matter free from all doubt; but, certainly, though my opinion may be worth little, yet, as far as it goes, the abolition law strikes at those dealings; and I will state the grounds of that opinion. As your lordships will remember, a change took place in the abolition law in 1824. The act of 1811 (the 51st Geo. III. c. 23.), which I had the great satisfaction of introducing, and which obtained the unanimous concurrence of the House of Commons and of your lordships, in every stage of the Bill, made slave-trading punishable as a crime; before that time, it had only been dealt with as an offence against the revenue laws—treated as smuggling, and visited with fine and forfeiture. But my Bill made it a felony. Then in 1824, a material alteration was made: slave trading was divided into two kinds, one being declared to be piracy, and liable to capital punishment, if committed within the Admiralty jurisdiction; and the other, if out of that jurisdiction, declared to be a *clergyable* felony, and punished with fourteen years transportation. Now, in attaching the lesser punishment to the act of slave-trading committed out of the Admiralty jurisdiction, the statute 5 Geo. IV. c. 113. gives this description. I shall only read the part applicable to the transactions in question—the buying and selling slaves in foreign countries. The first section having declared all such proceedings to be unlawful, and having generally prohibited them, the tenth declares them to be felony, and punishable, as I have stated, with fourteen years transportation, in these terms:—

“Except in such special cases as are hereinafter provided for, if any person shall deal, trade in, purchase, sell, barter, or transfer, or contract for the dealing, trading in, purchasing, selling, bartering, or transferring of any slave or slaves, or persons intended to be dealt with as slaves, he shall be deemed and taken to be a felon, and, being convicted thereof, shall be adjudged guilty of felony, and suffer fourteen years transportation.”

Then the thirteenth section provides for these special cases, contemplated in the exception of the tenth section, following precisely the words of the enacting part of that section:—

“Provided always, that nothing hereinbefore contained shall be deemed or taken to prevent any person from dealing, trading in, purchasing, selling, bartering, or transferring, or contracting, to deal, trade in, purchase, sell, barter, or transfer any slave or slaves, lawfully being within any island, colony, dominion, fort, or factory, belonging to, or in the possession of, his Majesty, in case such dealing, &c., be with the true intent and

meaning of employing such slave or slaves in such colony in which he or they may be at the time of such employment."

And then comes the fourteenth section, which gives power to remove, by land or by sea, any slaves from one part of any such colony, in the possession of his Majesty to another part of any such colony; but if the other part of the colony happens to be another island, then that person shall only be allowed to transfer a slave from one island to another by licence first had and obtained from the governor of the colony, upon satisfactory proof being made to such governor, that the slave is only intended to be removed from one estate, the property of the owner of the slave, to another estate, also the property of such owner of the slave. Then how can a person in Brazil or Cuba be authorized to buy a slave under the thirteenth section, or to remove a slave by land or by sea from one part to another of Cuba or Brazil under the proviso in the fourteenth section, when neither Cuba nor Brazil are places in the possession or under the dominion of the British crown; the special cases in which, alone, it is provided by the thirteenth or fourteenth sections, that the felony is not committed, namely, the cases of buying, selling, or removing in the colonies' settlements or possessions of the British crown? It is upon these grounds, I feel bound to state my inability to understand on what view of the law those respectable parties have been advised to proceed, who have embarked in these speculations—have become the owners of slaves by purchase, or, which is the same thing, have, by their agents, purchased and sold, or transferred and removed, slaves in Cuba or in Brazil. I am unable to perceive upon what view of the law they can have been advised that they may safely embark in such speculations. So, likewise, it is made felony by the tenth section, knowingly to lend or advance money or goods to be employed in accomplishing any of the objects hereinbefore forbidden or declared to be unlawful,—those objects being the buying, selling, bartering, or in any manner dealing in slaves or persons intended to be dealt with as slaves. How any person can have been advised, with a due regard to the provisions of these Acts, either to send goods or to advance money for the purpose of working a concern which requires the buying and selling of slaves, surpasses my powers of comprehension. Nevertheless, that such advice must have been given,—that such a view of the law must have been taken, there cannot be a doubt; because numbers of wealthy and respectable individuals are known to have embarked their capital in the cultivation of foreign plantations, and the working of foreign mines; to say nothing of the original act of becoming owners of the stock of slaves upon the property by the purchase. What then remains to be done? I trust that my Noble Friends opposite will turn their attention to this subject at the earliest possible period; and if any doubts should, upon a full consideration of the statutes appear to exist, that they will, as soon as Parliament meets, come down with a declaratory Act to have those doubts removed; but if there should be no doubt,—if it should be clear that the Acts in question are illegal,—then the most satisfactory course would be to notify the law by Proclamation, warning all persons who have unwarily got into the predicament which I have described, that the sooner they remove themselves from that predicament the better and the safer will it be for them. Such a course is only fair towards the parties, more especially towards those who have unwarily purchased shares in joint-stock concerns, most of whom may be supposed ignorant of the dealing in slaves which their capital has been supporting. The proclamation will give them due notice of this, and put them upon withdrawing from the partnership. At all events, it will prevent the possibility of any persons hereafter embarking in the same speculations, by stating what the inevitable consequence must be of such transactions.

My Lords, the course which the legislature formerly took with respect to the slave-trade, appears to me, in connexion with the present question, to be well deserving the attention both of the government and your lordships. In 1806, the first Bill prohibiting the traffic, was brought in by my late learned and excellent friend, Sir Arthur Pigott, then Attorney-

General under Lord Grenville's Administration; it passed with little opposition, and is the 46th Geo. III. It prohibited the foreign slave-trade; that is, it forbade any British subject to engage in the slave-trade carried on by foreign countries or colonies; and it forbade the lending of money, or sending goods, or in any way embarking capital in transactions connected with that foreign traffic. In 1807, Lord Grey (then Lord Howick) brought in the first general Abolition Act, the 47th Geo. III., which made all slave-trading within the dominions of the British crown, and all slave-trading by British subjects everywhere, liable to pecuniary penalties, including the forfeiture of the ship and cargo. Then came the 51st Geo. III., the Act which I had the honour of passing through parliament, and which declared slave-trading to be felony, in the way I have already described. And, lastly, the Act of 1824, brought in by Mr. Canning, (the 5th Geo. IV.) made the change in the law which I before stated, repealing or consolidating the former statutes; but that Act, so far from diminishing the stringency of their provisions, extended them considerably, and made some dealings which before were not deemed slave-trading to be clearly slave-trading; and amongst others, made the transactions to which I have called the attention of your lordships punishable as felonies, with the differences to which I have adverted.

It thus appears that the slave-trading of British subjects in foreign colonies was the first branch of the traffic which the law struck down, and that when all slave-trading was not only made illegal, but, in the end, felonious, the foreign branch was, as might be expected, included in the enactment. My lords, nothing but the late period of the session prevents me from taking the course, now, which I took in 1810, with respect to the African slave-trade, when it was found that the acts of 1806 and 1807 were ineffectual; namely, the moving a resolution and address, pledging the house, "at an early period in the next session, to take the subject into its serious consideration, with a view to prevent such daring violations of the law." That proposition was adopted unanimously by the House of Commons; and, in consequence of the address, the felony Bill was brought in the next year, and passed with equal unanimity. If your lordships see any objection to such an address now from the session being about to close, I should be unwilling to press it on your attention. At any rate, I shall be satisfied with the declaration of the noble earl, the president of the board of trade, that he will lose no time, upon the prorogation of parliament, in drawing the attention of the law-officers of the crown to the subject, and in dealing with it as the result of the inquiry may show to be most effectual for carrying into complete execution the existing laws. Legal proceedings may probably be required in some cases; but the proclamation will also be advisable. With respect to the report of Dr. Madden, on the state of things upon the African coast, I understand my noble friend has some objection to its being laid before parliament. I have no doubt he will state the nature of that objection. As it contains some valuable details, I shall move for its production. But whether it be produced or not, I trust the government will not fail to act immediately upon the information which it conveys.

Before concluding my statement, I wish to call the attention of my noble friend, the president of the board of control, to the state of slavery and the slave-trade, in that part of the world with which his duties are most immediately connected. Much doubt has been expressed as to the legal existence of slavery in Malacca. It certainly was the opinion of one Malacca government that there was no such thing countenanced by law, although another entertained, subsequently, a different opinion; but all doubts should have been removed by the unanimous resolution which was adopted by the whole body of the proprietors, in November, 1829, to liberate all their slaves on the 31st December, 1841. I think this would be perfectly good ground for an order in council, putting down slavery in the colony; and I have no doubt my noble friend will take that subject into his consideration, the rather that I believe he agrees with those who hold it to be unsanctioned by law. I will now

draw his attention to the dreadful effects of slavery and slave-trading in that part of the world which is under his administration. By the kindness of one of the individuals engaged in the law commission in India, I have had access to a report made by Lord Auckland, and which I apprehend has been sent to my noble friend.

LORD ELLENBOROUGH.—It has been sent, and was printed and laid on the table of the House of Commons early in April.

LORD BROUGHAM.—I was not aware of that, having been abroad at the time. It contains a report made to the commissioners by Major Sleeman, who describes the practices resorted to by certain gangs of the natives for the purpose of supplying the slave-market, he says:—

“These gangs invariably take their families with them on their expeditions, and the female members of the gangs are employed as inveiglers to win the confidence of the emigrant families they fall in with on the road. They introduce these families to the gang, and they are prevailed upon to accompany them to some place suitable for their designs upon them, when the parents are murdered by the men, while the women take care of the children.”

He then gives the examination of a number of the wretches who belong to those gangs. One of them says,—“We call our trade megpunna, our trade being,” he adds, “the murder of travellers for their children.” Another of them, being examined, says, in answer to the question:—

“Are you not afraid that the children will disclose the manner in which you got them, and thereby get you into trouble?—We invariably murder our victims at night, first taking the precaution to put the children to sleep, and in the morning we tell them that we have purchased them of their parents, who have gone off and left them.”

Again he is asked:—

“You seem to have been in the habit of selling children in all parts of the country, how have you avoided being apprehended?—The children are seldom aware of the fate of their parents; and, in general, we sell them to people very well acquainted with the nature of our proceedings.”

But it is not merely a general description which they give. The details of their commerce are presented to us. Another Jemadar, or leader of one of these gangs, says:—

“After the capture of Bhurtpoor,” (which, according to my recollection, was in the year 1826,) “Nanoo Sing, Brinjarah, and four other Brinjarahs, residents of Kurnoul, came to me with four travellers and their four children, and invited me to participate in their murder, which I consented to, and with the assistance of my gang we strangled the whole of them, preserving the lives of the children, whom we so'd at Jelpore for 120 rupees,”—(that is about £12.) “half of which was divided among the members of my gang. After this affair, I resolved on selecting for my victims the poorest class of travellers,”—(which they do manifestly because poor people are less likely to be inquired after), “and murdering them for their children, for whom there was so great a demand in all the great cities. Since which I have committed the following murders —.”

And then, I presume, he related the number of murders, though the report omits them.

Another of these jemadars, when examined, is desired to give the particulars of the Husseeagunge affair, and he says,—

“I left my home with a gang of forty Thugs, and proceeded to Husseeagunge, where Heera Dass and Rookmune went to the city of Muttra for the purpose of buying some clothes, and succeeded in winning the confidence of four travellers, two men and two women, with their three children, whom they brought with them to our encampment; after passing two days with us, Teella Dass, Mudhoo Dass, Brinjarahs, and Dewa Hookma, Teelake, Gungarum, Brinjarahs, Balluck Dass, Chutter Dass, Neput Dass, and Hunooman Dass, prevailed on this family to accompany

them to the banks of the Jumma, and murdered the four elderly travellers in a garden near the village of Gokool; after throwing their bodies into the Jumma, they took their three children to the tanda, or encampment, of Dewa Brinjarah, near the village of Kheir, and sold the two female children for forty rupees, and the male for five rupees."

The murder, therefore, of these four persons was committed for between £4 and £5. Another person, a woman, who was examined; said,—

"We now went off to Thunaiseir, where we encamped in a grove on the bank of a tank, and here several parties of travellers were inveigled by the wives of the leaders of our gangs to come and take up their lodgings with us:—1. A Cbumar, with three daughters, one thirty years of age, and the others young. 2. The widow of a carpenter, and her son, ten years of age. 3. A Brahmin and his wife, with one beautiful daughter, fourteen years old, another five, and a son six years of age. 4. A Brahmin and his wife, with one daughter about fourteen, another twelve, and a son three years of age. These travellers lodged for two or three days among the tents of the Naeks and Brinjarabs; after which we all went one morning to a village in the territory of the Toorooee Rajah; I forget his name. Here very heavy rain fell at night, and deluged the country, and we got no rest. The next morning we went to a village on the bank of the canal, still in the same Rajah's country. The next day we went to a village on the bank of the Jumina; and two hours after night Kaner Dass proposed that we should go down to the sacred stream of the Jumma, say our prayers, and remain there. They all went down accordingly, leaving me, Roopla and his second wife (Rookmune) at the village. They murdered the seven men and women, and threw their bodies into the river; but who killed them, or how they were killed, I know not. The Chumar and his eldest daughter, the two Brahmins and their wives, and the carpenter's widow, were all murdered. They brought the nine children back to us a watch and a half before daylight. They were all crying a good deal after their parents, and we quieted them the best way we could with sweetmeats and playthings. We came to Beebeepore, and encamped in the grove. A daughter and son of the Brahmin's were extremely beautiful, and these we left with Dbyan Sing for sale. We came on to a village, a *ross* distant from Beebeepore. Here a trooper came up to Beebeepore, saying that he had heard of several people being murdered, and suspected us of the crime. The head men of the village of Beebeepore, and some of the Brinjarabs came to our camp with the trooper, and assured him that he must be mistaken, as they knew us all to be very honest, inoffensive people; and, taking him back to Beebeepore, they treated him with great consideration, and he went away apparently satisfied. But, fearing that our deeds had become known, Perala and Newla's wives and Pemla's mother took off the seven other children to Dhyan Sing, and left them all in his charge. Pemla went to Kurnaul, and Goorbuksh and his gang went to Beebeepore, while my husband and his party remained where we were. A woman who keeps prostitutes came from Kurnaul, and purchased and took away all the children."

Human language sinks under the vain attempt at giving utterance to the mingled feelings of pity and of horror which rise in the breast upon the recital of such atrocities as these,—a vain attempt, and as superfluous as vain,—for I defy any power of the imagination to paint a scene more hideous, more unbearable than the simple description of the deeds themselves, in the plain words of the monsters who perpetrated them. Africa itself, steeped in blood for centuries by other branches of the infernal slave traffic, and still laid waste by the Spaniards and Portuguese,—with the connivance, I am grieved to say, of more humane nations,—Africa itself never presented a more appalling sight,—a more horrible example of that utter disregard for human life,—that proneness to take it away,—with which the traffic in human beings appears to strike and blight the heart in every region which it is permitted to curse.

My lords, while giving way to our natural feelings respecting these wretches, we ought to reserve a part of our indignation for the system in which their execrable enormities have their origin. They are the naturally appointed fruits of slave trading; but you may be well assured that, as long as it is lawful to hold human beings in slavery, the dealing in slaves cannot be put down; and atrocities like these which I have deemed it my painful duty to detail, will, in one shape or another, never cease to be committed.

My lords, I have no doubt whatever, that the advice will now be adopted which was given by my noble friend, formerly the secretary for the colonies (Lord Glenelg), a few months before he left that department, when—well acquainted as he is with all Indian affairs, and anxious for the general emancipation of the slaves,—he strongly recommended the acceleration of that great event in Ceylon. Considering the great weight of his authority on this subject, I have no doubt that his very important despatch of the 24th of November, 1838, will be taken into early and attentive consideration by my noble friend at the head of the Indian department. It applies, in principle, to India, as well as Ceylon, and it will, I trust, lead to measures, accelerating, as much as possible, a general emancipation,—the most effectual means of extinguishing the slave-trade, and preventing such atrocities as we have just been forced to contemplate.

PETITION OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY, REFERRED TO IN LORD BROUGHAM'S SPEECH.

To the Right Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled.

The humble petition of the Committee of the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society,

Sheweth,

That, whilst your petitioners sincerely rejoice in the fact that the African slave-trade has been declared piracy by the legislature of this country, and that the law of the land denounces every British subject directly or indirectly engaged therein as a felon, and subjects him, on conviction, to the ignominious punishment of a felon; they deeply lament that not a few of their opulent countrymen, occupying influential positions in society as manufacturers and merchants, as officers in her Majesty's army and navy, and as civil functionaries, are well known to have been guilty of this flagrant crime, either personally or by their agents, unawed by the fear of God or of man, and still persist in the same, unaffected by the cruel sufferings and degradation they inflict on humanity, and uninfluenced by the requirements and denunciations of law, whether human or divine.

That your petitioners would call the attention of your right honourable house to the fact, that there have been formed, at different periods during the last fifteen years, various mining companies in this country, with large capitals at their disposal, who carry on their operations in the empire of Brazil, or in the Spanish island of Cuba; that their mines are worked principally by slaves purchased by the agents of those companies; that the greater part, if not the whole, of these victims of oppression have been illicitly imported into these countries since the period when such importation was declared contraband, felonious, or piratical; and that as your petitioners are informed and believe, these companies still continue to purchase newly imported Africans, to supply the wastes of mortality, or to meet the other exigencies of their establishments.

That your petitioners lament to say that officers of her Majesty's army and navy, as well as functionaries in the civil service, have accepted engagements in connexion with these companies; and that they are informed and believe that such persons have been the agents employed in the purchase of slaves on account of the same.

That your petitioners call the attention of your right honourable house to the fact, that banking companies, with large funds at their disposal, have also been formed in this country; and that they either have already formed, or are in process of forming branch establishments in countries where the slave-trade is carried on, or where slavery in all its horrors still exists.

That your petitioners grieve to say that there are manufactured in this country, in enormous quantities, articles known by the name of *coast goods*, which are employed exclusively in the African slave-trade, in barter for human beings; and that these form a considerable branch of the export trade of this country to Brazil and Cuba, and to the western coast of Africa.

That the consignees of British merchants and manufacturers, or branch houses of their establishments in Brazil and Cuba, dispose of such goods to persons well known as traffickers in human beings; that they not unfrequently have, if not a direct, yet an indirect interest, by conditional arrangements, in the guilty traffic itself; and that in all cases they vend such goods, well knowing the disgraceful and inhuman object to which they are to be applied.

That your petitioners are informed and fully believe, that fetters and shackles employed in the slave-trade, or in the punishment and torture of slaves, form part of the export trade of this country to Brazil and Cuba.

That your petitioners have grounds for knowing that vessels have been built in this country specially for the slave-trade, and they have reason to fear, that many have been covertly prepared for that nefarious traffic in British harbours.

That your petitioners deeply regret to add, that British subjects have become the purchasers of estates in Brazil and the Spanish colonies, which they work by slaves, and which they have stocked, either wholly or in part, with newly imported Africans, thus giving the benefit of their wealth, skill, and enterprise to the maintenance of these enormous evils.

It will thus be seen by your right honourable house, that British subjects, instigated by the sordid love of gain, to the great dishonour of their country and in defiance of its laws, are, either directly or indirectly, among the chief props and supports of the African slave-trade; that they supply capital or the means of carrying it on to a fearful extent, reckless of the miseries which they inflict on the human race, the insult they offer to the Most High; and the evil example they set to others: that they obstruct the consummation of that great work to which the legislature, the government, and the people of this country have so nobly devoted themselves, and to secure which they have spent millions of the national treasure; that they offer the chief impediment to a peaceful, legitimate, and lucrative commerce with Africa; that they prevent the civilization and religious improvement of its people; and that they render the expensive armaments which are kept up on the coasts of Africa, Cuba, and Brazil, the means of increasing the horrors, without diminishing the extent of the slave-trade.

Your petitioners, therefore, earnestly implore your right honourable house, either to extend the provisions of the act, 5th Geo. cap. 113, commonly called the Consolidated Slave-trade Abolition Act of 1824, so as effectually to prevent British subjects from holding and purchasing slaves in foreign countries, under any pretences whatsoever, and to bring to speedy and condign punishment those of them who have hitherto violated with impunity the existing laws; or to appoint a committee of your right honourable house to inquire forthwith into the facts alleged by your petitioners, whose duty it shall be to report to your right honourable house such measures as may be deemed requisite to suppress effectually the guilty practices referred to.

And your petitioners will ever pray, &c.

JOHN WOODWARK,
Chairman of the Committee.

BRITISH SUBJECTS IMPLICATED IN THE SLAVE-TRADE AND SLAVE-HOLDING.

The gold mines of Minas Geraes, in Brazil, are held by British Companies, and are worked principally by slaves purchased contrary to the laws of this country, which declare such dealings in "the persons of men," to be felonious and piratical, and punishable, on conviction, by transportation for fourteen years, or for life, according to circumstances.

	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.
The Gongo Soco Mine . . .	176	113	129	418
" Cata Branca ditto . . .	256	86	64	406
" Concéciao ditto . . .	30	10	10	50
" Macaubes and Coeas ditto	328	156	155	619
" St. João del Rey ditto .	234	96	30	360
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	1024	441	388	1858
" Candonga ditto	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
				240
				<hr/>
				2093

The Minas Geraes Company having abandoned their mine, sold the negroes to the Imperial Mine and the St. João del Rey.

In Cuba, Mr. Turbull found that British subjects were part proprietors in the copper mines of that colony. In one which he visited (Cobre,) he states, that "the labourers employed were nearly 900 in number," and that "more than one-half of them were slaves, some the property of the Mining Company, and others hired out, as is not uncustomary, from their owners in the neighbourhood."

British subjects are also extensive proprietors of plantations worked by slaves, both in Brazil and the Spanish colonies; and it is evident from the official reports of her Majesty's Commissioners, as well as from private authority of the highest character, that British capital, in one form or another, is extensively employed in prosecuting the slave-trade, as well as sustaining the system of slavery in different parts of the world. It is well known also that the "coast goods" used in the purchase of slaves in Africa, as well as the instruments of torture used for the confinement and punishment of slaves during "the middle passage," and on the plantations, are manufactured for those purposes in this country.

SLAVERY IN BRITISH INDIA.

Although it is impossible to arrive with any accuracy at the exact number of slaves in British India, an idea of its extent may be formed from the following statement, drawn almost exclusively from parliamentary papers, viz.:-

Tipperah	313,065	Shahabad	21,340
Sylhet	361,240	Assam	27,000
Mymensingh	363,677	Arcot	20,000
Dacca	275,190	Surat	3000
Chittagong	175,200	District between the Kistna	} 15,000
Rajeshaye	766,341	and Toongbutra	
Cuttack	600,000	Southern Mahratta country	7500
Rungpore	536,140	Malabar, Canara, Coorg,	} 401,000
Sarun	180,509	Wynad, Cochin, and	
Tirhoot	212,210	Travancore	
Behar and Patna	131,280	Tinnevelly	32,4000
Moorshedabad	95,366	Trinchinopoly	10,600
Bhaugulpore	49,861	Ceylon, Malacca, and Pe-	} 30,000
Purneah	24,560	nang, about	

In all 4,974,079! Large as this amount may appear, it forms but a part of the entire slave population of British India. What their condition is, may be gathered from a pamphlet, entitled, "Slavery and the Slave-trade in British India," published by the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, to which attention is earnestly directed.