THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT AND THE SLAVE TRADE. By the Rev. Joseph Tracy, D. D., of Boston. (Concluded from page 327.)

They naturally think, and do much to make others think, that only milder measures should be used. Whether similar reasons exist in respect to Portugal, we are not informed, but of course war cannot be made on Portugal, while Spain, the greater offender, is left unpunished.

There is another influence. The British government very naturally looks for information and advice to the officers of its navy on the African coast; and it is very natural that some of those officers should think that course the best which is most profitable and pleasant to themselves. The sixty-three treaties, to which we have referred, show that some of them have labored in the right direction, uninfluenced by the desire of prizemoney. The views of others can be given on their own authority. Lieut. Charles H. Bell, of the United States Navy, in a despatch to the Secretary of the Navy, dated July 28, 1840, wrote:

"Between Cape St. Ann and Cape Palmas there are two slave stations—one at the mouth of the Gallinas river, and the other at New Cess. There were collected and confined in the barracoons, or slave-prisons of the former, five thousand slaves, and the latter fifteen thousand, waiting for an opportunity to ship them across the Atlantic.

"It is customary for the slavers to run into one of these stations in the evening, take on board three or four hundred negroes during the night, and run off with the land-breeze the next morning. If they do not meet with a cruiser after running thirty miles, they are safe until they get to the West Indies, where there is again some slight chance of capture before they have an opportunity of landing their cargoes. I therefore proposed to three of the British commanders I fell in with, to blockade these two stations, instead of cruising so far off the coast. The anchorage is good and safe, and one vessel at each station could lie in such a position as to intercept any vessel coming in. The invariable reply to this proposition was: 'This is an unhealthy climate; we come out here to make prize-money; if a slaver is captured without her cargo, she is sent to Sierra Leone, where the expense of condemnation amounts to nearly the whole value of the vessel, which is the perquisite of those in the employment of the government at that place, and we, who have all the labor and exposure, get nothing; whereas, if we capture a vessel with slaves on board, we receive five pounds sterling ahead for each of them, without any deduction. Therefore it is not our interest to capture those vessels without their cargoes.''' (See Kennedy's Report to the House of Representatives, February 28.

This statement concerning prize money is in accordance with several treaties. See especially the Conventions with France, of November 30, 1831, and March 22, 1833, in the British Statutes at Large, vol. 73, [3 and 4 Gul. IV. chap. 72.] Sec. 5, p. 664, fixes the head money at five pounds; besides which the captors have (p. 659) sixty-five per cent. of the net proceeds of the sale of the vessel; which, after deducting the expenses of condemnation and sale, is very little.

Under this system, if the Pluto had remained at the mouth of the Congo, watching the Orion, her officers and crew would have only earned their monthly wages. By their ruse, tempting the Orion to load and set sail, they had an interesting chase after her, and gained the bounty on the slaves found on board, of more than twenty thousand dollars. Of course, the temptation is strong to encourage and facilitate the loading and sailing of slavers; for the more there are at sea, the more chances there are of making money by capturing some of them. And it is very natural that those who are governed by such motives, should give their government such information and advice as their own interest requires.

Whether any officers of the United States Navy, who have similar compensation, have been governed by such motives, we do not know.

No one of them, we think, has ever avowed it, nor are we aware of any reason to suspect it, beyond the mere fact that the temptation exists. If there are any such cases, we have reason to believe that they are few and carefully concealed.

We must also notice a third British interest, which gains by the continuance of the slave trade. But first, let the reader turn back to Lord John Russell's despatch, and read again what he says of the need of laborers in the sugar colonies.

By act of Parliament, in 1824, for consolidating the laws against the slave trade, [5 Georgii IV. chap. 113,] it is provided in sec. 22, that slaves taken from slave ships may, under Orders in Council, be bound as apprentices for seven years, [Statutes at Large, vol. 64, p. 636] Sec. 31, p. 639, provides that such Orders in Council may be made, as shall prevent them from becoming chargeable to the colonies where they are, after the expiration of their apprenticeship. In the Conventions with France of 1831 and 1833, already quoted, the two governments "reserve to themselves, for the welfare of the slaves themselves, the right to employ them as free laborers, conformably to their respective laws." Other treaties contain similar provisions. See, for example, the treaty with the Republic of Equador, in Statutes at Large for 1848, chap. 116, p. 784.

Under these treaties and laws, the slaves taken from slave ships go, as "apprentices," to supply that awful want of labor in the sugar colonies, which Lord John Russell so forcibly describes, and which he thinks must be supplied in some way, even if it requires a combination of all civilized nations in both hemispheres to bring Chinese from the antipodes. Negro laborers are much more valuable than Chinese. Persevering and expensive attempts to procure them, by going to their homes in Africa and hiring them, have failed. They can be obtained only as they are obtained for Cuba, by the slave-trade; as they are obtained for Jamaica, by capturing slavers with slaves on board. In this way, it may be done much cheaper than the inferior article can be imported from China. And so it is, that every cargo of slaves shipped from Africa and captured by a British cruiser, is a pecuniary benefit to British sugar planters. In fact it seems evident that if the planters should fit out slave ships, with instructions to proceed to Africa, purchase cargoes, and be captured, they would get their labor cheaper than they could import it from China. The only difficulties would be some danger of detection, and some danger that the same planters who incur the expense would not always reap the advantage. The British sugar interest is immense, and exerts an immense influence on British thought and legislation. It was not able to prevent the passage of laws for abolishing the slave trade first, and slavery itself afterwards; but it has proved itself able to substitute apprenticeship for slavery, and the getting of cheap labor in some way, at all events, for the slave trade. Its influence shows itself palpably in Lord John Russell's proposal, that the leading nations of Christendom shall unite in a systematic importation of cheap labor from China for everbody's use, as a means of tempting Spain to fulfil her treaties.

Other influences doubtless conspire with these; but it is evident that the interests of British holders of Spanish securities, of British naval officers, avaricious of prize money, and of British sugar planers, all acting in the same direction, must exert a powerful influence on British thought and action. It is no wonder that they are able, in some degree, to mislead the government in respect to the best course for the extinction of the slave trade.

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