

SLAVERY OR "SACRED TRUST"?

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"PORTUGUESE SLAVERY—BRITAIN'S DILEMMA," "AFRICA—SLAVE OR FREE?"
ETC., ETC.

PREFACE BY
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WITH AN APPENDIX
GIVING THE COMPLETE TEXT OF THE MANDATES
(WITH THE EXCEPTION OF REPETITION CLAUSES)
CONFERRED UPON THE MANDATORY POWER BY
THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

LONDON
WILLIAMS AND NORGATE LTD.
14, HENRIETTA STREET, COVENT GARDEN, W.C.2
1926

PREFATORY NOTE

THE title of this book has been deliberately chosen as a challenge to existing Colonial systems, whether under European, Asiatic or Negroid control. This has been done with the object of asserting that even when the estimated three million slaves are set free and "slavery in all its forms" has been completely abolished, civilisation cannot rest upon its oars, but must press on until the Colonising Powers accept and apply to all "subject" races the principles of the Covenant of the League of Nations, enshrined in the Covenant phrase "Sacred Trust." In practice this means service by the strong, and not the exploitation of the weak. It means, also, the right of "backward races" to rise in the civic, industrial and political spheres to the full stature of a free manhood. It means that no "barriers" founded solely upon race, or creed, or colour may be erected against any race which is working out its own salvation.

The Publishers, when inviting the author to prepare this book, stipulated that the principal features affecting "Native Races" to-day should be stated within the compass of 200 pages. These limitations mean that masses of material have necessarily been discarded, but at the same time, this "review" of burning problems in the Colonial Dependencies of the world, the infamous tragedy of Slavery and the worst forms of Exploitation have been put into a compass which makes it possible for all to read—no matter how busy. If the

picture drawn is a dark one, it has its brighter side—brighter than at any period during the last twenty-five years, namely, that the League of Nations has now undertaken the total abolition of “Slavery in all its forms,” whilst at the same time summoning the World Powers to pursue the splendid ideal of the “Sacred Trust” as the relationship of the stronger White Races towards the Coloured Races of the world. The struggle for the accomplishment of this ideal will be a stern one, but it is one that demands and will surely receive the help of all those men and women who love justice.

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PREFACE

THE title of Mr. Harris's book states in three words one of the great problems of the coming century. The relations of the "higher" races of mankind to the "lower" or, to speak more precisely, of those people who are "advanced" to those who are "backward" in the age-long struggle for wealth and power, form some of the most obscure as well as the most dark and bloodstained chapters in the history of mankind. But, by this time, serious students of the problem have reached at least some negative conclusions. The "lower races" cannot be simply left to themselves. There is too much money to be made out of them; and if "good white men" leave them alone, "bad white men" will only exploit them the more ruthlessly. They cannot be made real equals of the white man by mere fictions of equality before the law. It is not much satisfaction to the coloured man to have equal suffrage if the white men stand with shot guns at the polling booths to see to it that no "damned nigger" votes. The only practical solution is on the lines laid down in Article 22 of the Covenant. The peoples who cannot "stand by themselves in the strenuous conditions of the modern world" must be protected and trained by those who can; their "well-being and development" must be accepted as "a sacred trust of civilisation."

The alternative is—in some form or other, sometimes disguised and sometimes mitigated—Slavery. If decent people are not prepared, in the territories of British and European Governments, to tolerate Slavery in any form—and by now it seems safe to assume so much—we must make the continuous effort and face the occasional sacrifice that are implied in the acceptance of the Sacred Trust. A good trustee cannot let things drift; much less can he settle down contentedly to making profit out of his trust and setting his wards to work for him.

Most people, until lately, imagined that Slavery was abolished in 1815. Yet it seems that there are still in the World about three million slaves, a vigorous slave trade and many open slave markets.

The Report of the Temporary Commission set up by the League in 1924 led to the Draft Convention on Slavery and the Slave Trade which will be laid before the Governments for signature this autumn and will, if adopted, put into operation for the complete abolition of Slavery a far greater international force than could have been contemplated without the League. At the same time the Sixth Commission of the League Assembly recognised—as they were bound to recognise—that, all round this nucleus of definite Slavery, there was a vast penumbra of servile or quasi-servile labour conditions, in which the men with wealth, knowledge, organisation, machinery and, if necessary, guns at their back have made hard bargains with the men who have none of these things.

Fortunately, though these conditions remain for the most part outside the scope of the Slavery Convention, they are not outside that of the International Labour Organisation. And that body has set itself to consider the whole problem of “coloured” labour and to draw

up, if possible, some charter of elementary rights for even the most helpless of human workers.

The League is thus preparing three lines of advance; the principle of Mandate; the Convention for the abolition of Slavery and the Slave Trade; and the Charter for the protection of Coloured Labour. None of them is yet absolutely secure. The Charter of Coloured Labour is still only a project and may encounter powerful opposition before it is realised. The Slavery Convention is not yet accepted though it will probably be in force by next year. The Principle of Mandate is in actual and beneficent working; but it sets a standard rather higher than the interested parties are generally ready to accept, and its application makes constant calls on the vigilance and courage of the League's Mandate Commission. Still, each year sees some progress and, if the League's present programme is carried out in full, a work of incalculable value will have been achieved for the redemption of the weaker races from suffering and the saving of the stronger races from influences that tend to corrupt their whole nature.

It is not necessary for me to commend any book by Mr. John Harris on Slavery or the condition of aboriginal races. He is recognised in this sphere as being not only one of the most indefatigable reformers but also one of the greatest living authorities on matters of fact. I think also that public opinion in this country will probably support him on the two chief points about which he offers a personal judgment. In the first place we may surely take it that the Principle of Mandate has definitely superseded the old chaotic scramble for tropical colonies. No Power, in future, will be able simply to annex "backward" territories by conquest and administer them just as it pleases, without reference to

the rest of the world. And, in the second place, though the restoration of the particular territories taken from Germany is impracticable, it certainly seems desirable that, as soon as any new territories are ready to be brought under the Mandate System, the efficiency and good organisation which Germany has shewn in so many directions should also be employed in the service of the Sacred Trust.

GILBERT MURRAY.