

J. F. Hurley

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE

RELATING TO THE

ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

ON THE



GOLD COAST.

(In continuation of C. 1139 of 1875.)

*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.
February 9, 1875.*

LONDON:

PRINTED BY HARRISON AND SONS.

[C.—1159.] Price 2d.

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Further Correspondence relating to the Abolition of Slavery on the Gold Coast.

No. 1.

Governor Strahan to the Earl of Carnarvon.—(Received February 6.)

My Lord,

Government House, Cape Coast, January 3, 1875,

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship copy of a document which I have received purporting to be a petition of certain Kings and Chiefs of the Protectorate.

2. The names which appear upon it, besides those of twelve Cape Coast Chiefs, are those of the Kings of Mankessim, Abrah, Eccomfie, Inkosokoom, and Gomoah, two Chiefs of Salt Pond, and twenty-three other Chiefs, mostly of small dependencies of Mankessim and Abrah. I may remark that the districts represented by the Kings are in immediate contiguity with each other, and comprise a part of that limited area of territory bearing the specific name of Fanti country which, as your Lordship is aware, constitutes only a very small portion of the Protectorate. The assertion of representative character as being "for all Kings and Chiefs of the Protectorate" is an assumption which simply has no warrant or foundation whatever.

3. Being aware how unreliable are written communications purporting to emanate from the uneducated class of the population, there being no security that the views of the parties professedly represented are correctly given, nor even, indeed, that the names on such documents have been placed there with the authority or knowledge of their owners, I considered it desirable before making any answer to the petition to send for as many of the persons whose names appeared on it as I could possibly collect, for the purpose of ascertaining from themselves the real nature and object of the representations they might be desirous of making. Accordingly the five Fanti Kings already named (who it appeared happened to be in Cape Coast in consequence of a law suit in which they had been for some time engaged) gave their attendance, as well as several of the Cape Coast and other Chiefs.

4. The result of the conversations which I had through the interpreters, first, with each of the Kings and their respective Chiefs separately, and then with all of them together, confirmed the surmises which I had originally formed as to the character of this petition, the statements which I received from them being in essential particulars entirely at variance with what they are made to say in the document.

5. Your Lordship will observe that the petition sets out with the assertion that I informed the Kings and Chiefs at the meeting which took place at Cape Coast on the 3rd November, that "while no more slaves were to be purchased or pawns taken, yet no slave could leave his master or mistress without cause shown and proof of cruelty or maltreatment." It is then stated that subsequently to the meeting slaves have been set at liberty simply because they were no longer desirous of serving their masters, contrary, it is said, to what the petitioners were told and made to understand at the meeting. The supposed hardship and mischievous results anticipated from the general emancipation of slaves and pawns without compensation to their owners are then stated and enforced by a variety of arguments which are not likely to find sympathy in the mind of any English reader, and on which I need make no comment.

6. In order that the form of my questions should avoid suggesting the answers which should be returned, I confined myself at first to requesting each of the Kings who met me on this occasion to state verbally the purport of whatever representations he had desired to make to me by means of the petition in which I informed him his name appeared. The tenor of all the replies was the same, and was that these Kings, having been detained in

Cape Coast in attendance on the lawsuit before alluded to, had not been able to return to their country since the meeting of the 3rd November; that, while thus residing in Cape Coast, they had been informed that various of their people had left their villages and gone to different parts of the country; that they themselves had done nothing to cause this, but it had taken place in many instances, as they were informed, by reason of persons who had gone into the country misstating the effect of the Queen's Message as if it had conveyed an order that servants were now obliged to leave their masters, and that they, the Chiefs, had not thus understood the Message.

7. I also found that, on the subject of pawns, a misconception on the part of certain of the Chiefs had arisen from an error mentioned, into which it appeared the Magistrate at Saltpond had fallen, notwithstanding his instructions, viz., in supposing that he ought not to take cognizance of claims of debt where pawns had been given in security. The misconception of the Chiefs was easily removed, and it was explained to them that the local magistrate had made a mistake which would be corrected by additional instructions; and this accordingly has been done.

8. Having regard to the terms of the Petition, I was anxious to ascertain, as thoroughly as possible, whether there had been any such misapprehension on the part of any of the Kings and Chiefs of the announcement made at the meeting of the 3rd November, as these terms indicated. Accordingly, I asked them whether I had said anything on that occasion leading them to suppose that the liberty of any servant to leave his master was conditional, on cruelty or maltreatment of the servant. The replies were, that they, the speakers, quite understood what had been said at that meeting; that no conditions to the freedom of the servants were stated, and that the topics of cruelty or maltreatment were not mentioned. The King of Gomoah, who is a native of much intelligence, added in his reply, that I had informed the Kings and Chiefs that if, by kind treatment, they could induce their servants to remain with them, they were at liberty to do so, but that, if the servants wished to go, they should be at liberty to go, and could not be prevented.

9. I then caused to be interpreted that part of my statement of the 3rd November, in which I had informed the Kings and Chiefs that the Queen did not desire to force those who had been domestic slaves to leave their former masters, whilst, on the other hand, none could be compelled to continue living with their masters or to return to them, who did not wish to do so. This was followed by an interpretation being made of the notes which had been taken of what had been said by the Kings and Chiefs at the meeting, in answer to my statement, as well as my own reply to them. It was stated by all who were present that the passages interpreted were the identical words which they had previously heard at the meeting, and which they had themselves made use of in their answer.

10. In the course of this meeting various matters were discussed, collateral to, rather than directly connected with, the emancipation of slaves and pawns, with the details of which I need not trouble your Lordship. Towards the conclusion, the King of Gomoah, speaking for himself and for all who were present, expressed their satisfaction at having learned from me that the reports as to their servants being obliged to leave them had proceeded from no authority, and that the servants were (as they had originally understood) free to remain with them if they chose; and likewise at having had pointed out to them their proper mode of proceeding against the actual debtors for recovery of outstanding debts. On my asking whether there were other matters on which any one was desirous of making representations, no further subject was brought forward, and all expressed themselves satisfied with what had taken place.

11. It is worthy of observation that the subject of compensation, which is, as it were, the keynote of the Petition, was not once alluded to by any of the speakers, nor were any of the argumentative topics of which it is so largely made up. After having assured myself that the effect and purport of the scheme of emancipation was thoroughly understood by all who were present, and having given explanations upon the questions which had arisen, I reminded the Kings and Chiefs of the obligations they owed to the Queen, and informed them that laws had now been enacted giving effect to Her Majesty's wishes on the subject of slavery, to which it was their duty to give obedience, whilst any attempt at infraction would be rigorously punished. I concluded by informing them that what I had stated at this interview was to be taken as my answer to the Petition.

12. I believe the present Petition to have emanated, so far as concerns its main features and scope, from a few of the educated slave-holders of Cape Coast, advantage having been taken of the accidental presence of the five Kings in the town for a different purpose to obtain the use of their names and to attempt to engage them in raising an agitation on the subject of compensation, in which the promoters, even if they should have

no expectation of being successful, would yet hope to derive profit from the contributions on account of promised services which they would levy from the ignorant Chiefs of the bush. In such a process, the desire manifested in the terms of the Petition to induce in the minds of the Chiefs the belief that a promise had been at first made to them that their former slaves would not be allowed to leave them unless they were cruelly treated, and that the method of unconditional liberation, which is seen to be adopted is an innovation, becomes readily intelligible. I have now no doubt that misrepresentations as to my statement of the 3rd November were purposely made and put about immediately, or very soon after the meeting, by parties who desired to give such a colouring to the announcements as suited their own views of self-interest. These misrepresentations are reproduced and continued in this Petition.

13. I am not aware whether the archives of your Lordship's Office afford materials for forming a due appreciation of a class of natives who are found in Cape Coast and, to a small extent, in other towns on the sea board of the Gold Coast who have a smattering of education, but, being without industry or character, are incapable of following settled occupations, and who are ready to use the degree of knowledge they possess for any purpose, however mischievous, from which they can hope to reap any measure of selfish advantage. They have no real influence either with the native rulers of the Protectorate or with the population, but have occasionally in past times been able by misrepresentations and delusive promises to lead individuals or even sections of the community temporarily astray. It is to persons of this class that I attribute the attempts to cause misconception to which I have referred, as well as the authorship of the Petition.

14. The statements and answers made by the Kings and Chiefs at the interview which I have narrated were, however, most satisfactory, demonstrating as they did that, whatever might have been the endeavours to raise erroneous impressions as to what had taken place at the November meeting, the native authorities had perfectly apprehended what was stated to them, and the position which the former slaves now occupy. The fact of repeated instances throughout the country of the former slaves changing their abodes at a distance from Cape Coast without reference to their masters corroborates the view which I have already expressed to your Lordship, that the knowledge of their privileges is spreading with ample rapidity amongst the classes of the population now emancipated.

15. I would not have troubled your Lordship with this lengthy statement regarding the Petition on account of any importance which attaches to it in itself. But I have thought it right in this instance, as a typical one of many communications which are addressed to me in this Government, and which may even reach your Lordship otherwise than through my hands, that your Lordship should be thoroughly informed as to the real nature and worth of the representations which have been put forward.

16. Although it is not improbable that other attempts to raise agitation may be made of a similar or of a different nature to the present, which, notwithstanding the time which will be so occupied, it will be my duty to unravel carefully and to meet according to their real character, I have no apprehension that the scheme of emancipation will encounter any serious obstacle from such attempts. I believe, on the contrary, that the success of the scheme is now thoroughly assured.

I have, &c.

(Signed) GEO. C. STRAHAN.

P.S.—In reading over this despatch, I observe that I have omitted to mention that the mode adopted of addressing the Governor in a written petition is entirely foreign to the usages which prevail amongst the native authorities of the Protectorate. Whenever they have matters to communicate in which they feel interested and at liberty to address the Governor, they adopt the course of either attending upon him in person or by means of their trusted sword-bearers or messengers who are recognized as their representatives.

G. C. S.

Inclosure in No. 1.

Cape Coast, December 30, 1874.

To his Excellency Capain G. C. Strahan, R.A., Governor of the Gold Coast Colony, &c.,
Cape Coast.

The Petition of the Undersigned Kings and Chiefs of the Gold Coast Protectorate,

Most humbly sheweth,—

THAT your petitioners most respectfully approach your Excellency to lay before you a grievance of theirs, with a view to obtain redress therein.

On the 3rd day of November last your Excellency held a meeting of the Kings and Chiefs of the Protectorate, at which you delivered to them Her Majesty's Message on the subject of slavery and pawnholding.

1. At this meeting the said Kings and Chiefs (your petitioners among them) were told and made to understand by your Excellency that, though no more slaves were to be purchased nor pawns taken, yet no slave could leave his master or mistress without cause shown and proof of cruelty or maltreatment, and that pawns refusing to serve or work on leaving their master or mistress, the amount for which they had been given in pawn could be recovered.

2. Since the above meeting your petitioners have learned that a number of slaves have been manumitted, simply because they were no longer desirous of serving their masters, which process, your petitioners most respectfully urge, is not in accordance with what they were told and made to understand at said meeting, and it is this that has led your petitioners to address your Excellency.

3. Without dilating on the numerous evils that are likely to, and will most certainly, arise out of the method now adopted in dealing with the slave and pawn question, your petitioners respectfully solicit permission to bring under your Excellency's notice one or two of them.

4. Nearly nine-tenths of the slaves and pawns held by your petitioners and others in the country have descended to them by the laws and customs of the country, together with their landed property, palm-oil and other plantations, goods and chattels; those slaves and pawns who have not come into the hands of your petitioners and others by the laws of inheritance have been acquired from the proceeds of their labours.

5. These slaves and pawns are now, so it appears, to be emancipated without compensation being granted to their owners, who, by such a step, will become impoverished, and will be without the means of working or cultivating their plantations.

6. Such a course, your petitioners most humbly urge, will be a deathblow to the cultivation of native produce; it will throw back the commercial prosperity of the country for some years to come, and bring to a standstill the palm-oil and other trade of the Protectorate, for your petitioners will be without hands to work or cultivate as they have heretofore done their plantations. Even the common necessities of life will become scarce and hardly obtainable.

7. Your petitioners would also respectfully draw attention to the fact of there being no beasts of burden here, there being none of the facilities of civilized countries, and the absolute necessity there is to them of having their fellow men to work at present as carriers, &c., and they are certain, for more reasons than those herein stated, that the absolute and unconditional emancipation of their slaves, and the release and discharge of their pawns will create anarchy and confusion throughout the length and breadth of the Protectorate.

8. These slaves and pawns having descended to your petitioners and others as before stated, how are their plantations to be cultivated or worked if their slaves and pawns are emancipated in this manner? how are your petitioners and others to obtain the means of livelihood when deprived of the only resource they have? and how are they, when thus impoverished, when their slaves and pawns are thus liberated, how are they to obtain funds to hire and obtain the services of these slaves and pawns, who will then be free men?

9. Immense sums of money have been expended by your Petitioners and others in the purchasing of slaves—numbers of whom have been bought out of commiseration—and the taking of pawns in payment for debt and loans advanced; and the steps now taken are to deprive your Petitioners and others of the fruits of their labour, and of property that has descended to them by laws and customs, of which the Government have taken due cognizance.

10. The practice and system of buying slaves and of taking pawns has existed in the Protectorate from time immemorial, and during the two or three centuries that the British nation has ruled this country it has been recognized as a lawful institution. Within that period, Her Majesty's Court in the Protectorate have confirmed it as such, and have thus induced many a hard-working man to expend his money in the purchasing of slaves, and of the taking of pawns with a view to a profitable investment of his money in a country where there are no banks, no railway shares, or shares in any other enterprise or adventure obtainable; and thus suddenly to emancipate slaves and pawns contrary to what your Petitioners were told and made to understand at the said meeting, and without compensation, is, your Petitioners respectfully urge, virtually to impoverish the whole country, to paralyze commerce, and to bring the Protectorate to the verge of ruin.

Your Petitioners, therefore, humbly pray that your Excellency will be pleased to allow

them to retain their slaves and pawns on the conditions mentioned at said meeting; and that your Excellency may be pleased to forward their Petition for the consideration of Her Majesty the Queen, together with such additional representations as they may have to make, should it be contemplated to pass an Ordinance, or make any laws on the subject matter hereof before Her Majesty's assent thereto may be given.

And your Petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray, &c.

(Signed)

QUASSI EDDOR, *King of Mankessim*, his ✕ mark.

AUFOO OTTOO, *King of Abrah*, his ✕ mark.

COFFEE ACKINNEY, *King of Eccoomfee*, his ✕ mark.

QUAMINA ESSANDOR, *King of Inkoosocoom*, his ✕ mark.

QUASSI TANDOR, *King of Gomoah*, his ✕ mark.

QUASSI ATTAH, *Head Chief, Cape Coast*, his ✕ mark.

[Here follow 36 other signatures or marks.]

No. 2.

Governor Strahan to the Earl of Carnarvon.—(Received February 6.)

My Lord,

Government House, Cape Coast, January 8, 1875.

REFERRING to my despatch of the 3rd instant,* transmitting to your Lordship a document addressed to myself, having relation to the abolition of slavery and which purported to be a Petition from certain Kings and Chiefs of the Protectorate, I have now the honour to forward a Petition to Her Majesty on the same subject, which I have this day received.

2. I am unable, from want of time, to show in this instance, as in the case of the first Petition, the unauthentic character of the document which has been placed in my hands, probably on purpose, at a time when the mail is hourly expected, but, from the fact that it emanates from the same parties by whom the former Petition was produced—even the handwriting bring identical in which the names (which are not signed) are affixed to both documents, as well as from internal evidence of composition—I have no hesitation in stating that I do not consider the present Petition to be receivable in any way as an exposition of the views of the parties whom it professes to represent. It reiterates the topics of the previous Petition with some amplifications, and also contains some additional statements. I consider that in this case I should unworthily occupy your Lordship's and my own time by entering upon any analysis or commentary.

3. I take this opportunity of drawing your Lordship's attention to a Report from the Commandant of Accra, which happens to have reached me simultaneously with the Petition. As Accra is the centre of a district in which the palm oil manufacture as well as other industries have been much further developed than in the neighbourhood of Cape Coast or in any part of the Fanti country, and therefore much more liable to feel injurious consequences as regards its trade and industrial progress, if any such were resulting from the changed condition of the population, the remarks of the Accra Commandant as to what is taking place there stand in curious contrast with the forebodings of disaster which are so freely made in the Petition.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

GEO. C. STRAHAN.

P.S.—Since writing the above, I may point out to your Lordship, as showing the thorough want of principle in the promoters of the Petition, that my Private Secretary has brought to my notice that in the copy sent to me for the purpose of being forwarded to your Lordship, which purports to be a transcript of the Petition sent to myself, copy of which is forwarded in my despatch of the 3rd January,* the names of forty-three persons have been added which did not appear in the original Petition.

G. C. S.

Inclosure 1 in No. 2.

Cape Coast, January 7, 1875.

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty in Council.

The Memorial of the Undersigned Kings, Chiefs, Headmen, Captains, and other principal men of the Gold Coast Protectorate,

Most humbly sheweth,—

1. THAT from time immemorial slavery and pawn-holding has existed in your Majesty's Protectorate on the Gold Coast.

2. That since your Majesty's Government has ruled the Protectorate the system and practice of buying and selling slaves, and of taking pawns in payment for debt, has been recognized as a lawful institution.

3. During this period, slaves who ran away from their masters without just cause, unless cruelty or maltreatment could be proved on the part of their masters, were compelled by your Majesty's Courts here to return to serve their master, or to dispose of themselves to some other persons whom such slaves preferred to serve, handing the amount so obtained by them, generally the amount originally paid by their masters for them, to their masters. If cruelty or maltreatment were proved, then the authorities manumitted such slaves. This course of action has never at any time been opposed by your Memorialists, as being in accordance with the laws and customs of the country, and as meeting fully the requirements of the case; and had the same method been in continuance, your Memorialists would not have been under the necessity of approaching your Majesty in Council.

4. A step in a diametrically opposite direction having, within the last few days, been taken by his Excellency Governor Strahan, your Memorialists are compelled most humbly to address your Majesty with a view to obtain redress therein, as their efforts here have proved most futile.

On the 3rd November last Governor Strahan convened a meeting of the Kings and Chiefs of the western districts of the Protectorate in Cape Coast Castle, at which meeting some of your Memorialists were present, for the purpose, as they then learnt, of delivering to them your Majesty's Message on the slave and pawn question, which has been considerably agitated of late.

5. At this meeting, his Excellency Governor Strahan, after refusing to allow the Kings and Chiefs then present to retire till the next day, and thereby detaining the Kings and Chiefs against their wishes and will, consented to slaves (those already bought) being held by their masters so long as the slaves were not cruelly or badly treated, and that the amount paid for or advanced on any pawn could be recovered when such pawn refused to serve or work for her master or mistress.

6. These conditions were accepted by the Kings and Chiefs present and the meeting closed.

7. To the astonishment of your Memorialists hardly a week had elapsed ere his Excellency began granting manumission papers to numbers of slaves without any cause whatsoever being shown by them other than that the slaves were desirous of leaving their masters. No proof of cruelty or maltreatment was adduced; it was sufficient that the slaves wished to leave their owners.

8. Your Memorialists thereupon petitioned Governor Strahan on the subject, drawing his Excellency's attention to some of the evils likely to arise out of such proceedings, to the conditions he had granted them at the said meeting, and to the fact of his having now ignored those terms.

To this petition the only reply your Memorialists were able to obtain from Governor Strahan was that on the 1st of January instant, his Excellency sent for such of the Kings and Chiefs as were in town to meet him at Government House; the Kings were sent for one by one.

9. The King of Abrah, because he declined saying anything in the absence of the other petitioners, was locked up by the orders of Governor Strahan in one of the rooms in Government House for upwards of an hour or two; and several others detained at Government House and not permitted to leave for some time, although they had had an interview with his Excellency, and were desirous of retiring to their several residences. These arbitrary measures were adopted by his Excellency simply because the Kings and Chiefs then present stated the truth as regards the conditions granted them at the meeting of the 3rd November, and because they informed Governor Strahan that at that meeting he had not given them to understand that slavery was absolutely and for ever abolished.

10. Had Governor Strahan informed the Kings and Chiefs that he would not listen to any terms, as it was the wish of your Majesty that slavery should be absolutely and for ever abolished, there would have been no necessity for a petition of the tenor of the one inclosed to have been addressed to him; but, as it was, he gave your Memorialists to understand one thing while he has since acted up to another.

11. Without in any way animadverting on the conduct of his Excellency Governor Strahan at the meeting in the Castle, when he declined to give your Memorialists till the next day to deliberate over your Majesty's Message, and detained them in the Fort till they obtained the Concessions granted them, and without remarking on his imprisonment of the King of Abrah in Government House as before stated, and his detention of other Kings and Chiefs thereat, your Memorialists must most respectfully and humbly bring to your Majesty's serious notice, the conduct of Governor Strahan on each of those occasions.

13. It is not the desire of your Memorialists at the present moment to draw attention to behaviour which strikes at the root of one of the most fundamental laws of your Majesty's Kingdom, yet they feel it to be their bounden duty to bring it cursorily to your Majesty's notice, the more so as from time to time it has been their fortune or misfortune to be placed under the rule of officials who appear to have no regard to law or justice.

Your Memorialists will now proceed to lay before your most gracious Majesty their grievances.

13. By the laws and customs of the country anyone who has the means can buy slaves or take pawns. The slaves (domestic slaves so-called) on being bought by their masters, become members of their households and families; these slaves descend to the heirs of their masters, together with the landed and other property. In the absence of direct heirs, the slaves succeed to their masters; and numbers of people buy female slaves and take them to wife with a view to the children so begotten inheriting in preference to those had of a free woman.

14. So long as the slaves remain with their masters, the latter are bound to maintain, support, clothe, and feed them; when they are desirous of marrying, the masters have to undergo the expense; when sick, the masters pay for the attendance of doctors; if the masters own plantations, the slaves have set days to work for themselves and their masters; the slaves have their debts paid by their masters; in short, the slaves are treated by their masters as are their maternal branch of their families who are contradistinguished from the paternal.

15. Slaves when cruelly or badly treated are entitled to their emancipation; those deserting their masters, without just cause, must dispose of themselves to the persons they would like best to serve, and hand over the sums so obtained by them to their late masters. Slaves can obtain their freedom on paying to their masters what may be decided to be a reasonable sum; and when they become heirs to their masters the descent runs in the same manner. All other laws and customs regarding slaves are of but a secondary nature, such as the liability of the masters for their funeral expenses, &c. Pawns, on the other hand, can leave their owners as soon as they are in a position to redeem themselves; they may have a few additional items of expense to pay, and a small sum for each child that they may have in their owners' houses when leaving. At times when the moneys advanced on pawns, when of the feminine gender, are turned into dowry money by the owners marrying such pawns themselves, when the pawn ceases to be such.

15. Instances of cruelty and maltreatment are exceedingly rare, hardly on the average, among so large community of slave and pawning holding people, of twenty or fifty during the year.

16. Years at times elapse without a single instance of cruelty or maltreatment being clearly established or brought forward, for the simple reason that the owners of slaves and pawns know that such conduct will cost them the moneys so paid for such pawns and slaves besides something else in the shape of fine or imprisonment; and this has been hitherto, and will continue to be, a sufficient guarantee for the protection of slaves and pawns. Therefore, your Memorialists considered it to be no hardship of an excessive nature for them to consent (wrung out of them as it was) to the conditions granted to them by Governor Strahan on the 3rd November last, to which they now regret to find he had no intention of adhering.

17. In the first place, before bringing to your Majesty's notice some of the evils the measures that Governor Strahan has adopted are likely to create, your Memorialists must be permitted most humbly to state that they cannot accept the view that the late war was a war of their own. The British forces fought more to uphold and maintain the dignity of the British Empire than in defence of the people of the Gold Coast, whom your

Majesty has been pleased to take under your Majesty's gracious protection. Your Memorialists, nevertheless, have the highest sense of gratitude and loyalty towards your Majesty for the deep interest and concern that it has pleased you to evince towards them in saving them from the hands of a cruel and sanguinary foe.

18. Large sums of money are, and have been, annually expended in the buying, support, and maintenance of slaves from time immemorial up to the date of the promulgation of Governor Strahan's Proclamation of the 17th November last; as large sums have been spent in the taking of pawns; and these sums of money were the proceeds of earnings hardly obtained. Now Governor Strahan informs your Memorialists, directly contrary to the concessions he granted them, that slavery is for ever abolished, and that the immense sums of money expended by the ancestors of your Memorialists and by themselves are to be lost for ever, without any compensation or return from the slaves in any shape, degree, or form, although the value of their slaves alone, leaving aside the pawns, would more than double the amount expended by your Majesty's Government during the recent campaign.

19. The upshot of this measure is that the krooms, villages, and plantations of your Memorialists are now being deserted; pawns as well as slaves are leaving them in consequence of Governor Strahan's Proclamation; the pawns contending, rightly or wrongly, that if slaves who can succeed to their master's property are emancipated, they see no reason why they should not in like manner be discharged. The result will be that, in the course of a few weeks, the palm oil and other produce trade of the country will be at a standstill; no hands will be available to work the palm oil and other plantations; many a poor man and woman will be deprived of his or her means of support, and left to die of starvation in the interior; to make away with his or her life, as has already occurred; or to commit some deed of violence. The slaves themselves will infest the highways and render travelling in the interior parts of the country, where the police do not penetrate, highly dangerous; deeds of robbery and violence will be of every day occurrence; and the possibility of a collision between the emancipated slaves, who will be attempting such deeds, and their masters become exceedingly imminent. These are evils of a secondary class; the commercial prosperity of the country stands first and foremost.

20. Since Governor Strahan commenced giving manumission papers to any slaves who chose to apply for them, numbers of slaves and pawns who belong to the Ashantees who came down here to trade, have been seized by the authorities here, and set free. These men, women, and boys were sent and brought down as carriers, to take back the goods that their masters would purchase here to Ashantee, in the absence of railways, trains, tramways, canals, and the thousand and one other facilities obtainable in civilized countries. These people being seized upon, how are the Ashantee traders to carry away the goods purchased by them? And is this an inducement to other Ashantees to come down here to traffic? This will be a deathblow to the trade of the Protectorate with Ashantee, paralyze the commerce thereof, and ere long bring about another invasion of the country by the Ashantees, who, rather than submit to any such measures, will stake all on the cost of a die. These people, who are brought down by traders from the interior, are either slaves or pawns, and such a line of policy, where the Government cannot control the internal polity and economy of Ashantee and its dependencies, will surely prevent any Chief or trader coming near the Protectorate with his people, for the purposes of trade, and this is the outspoken intention of the Ashantees now in town; irrespective of which it will be worth considering the effect this measure will have on the revenue of the Protectorate, when legitimate commerce will have received so severe a check. Our proprietary rights in our slaves, and pawns as well, have been completely set aside by Governor Strahan's course of action, which is not at all in conformity with the compromise he guaranteed or granted us; and whilst knowing the abhorrence your Majesty and the British nation have for slavery in any shape, degree, or form, your Memorialists feel convinced that your Majesty in Council will not, after the conditions granted by your Majesty's Representative, abolish at once and for ever a custom of immemorial prescription, wound up and interwoven as it is with all the habits, laws, customs, and usages of their society, when such evils may and will readily flow from such a hasty measure.

21. The emancipation of slaves, in the manner now proclaimed by Governor Strahan leaves the slave-holding population impoverished; they are deprived of the services of their slaves, without means being placed at their command to hire and obtain the services of free men. The slaves themselves have no landed property; they have no village or kroom to which they can claim a right to reside in. Governor Strahan's line of action, whatever the Proclamation may say to the contrary, is an invitation to slaves to leave their masters; and, as such, it has been accepted and is acted upon; and will undoubtedly precipitate a complete breaking up of native society, and bring about the entire collapse of

trade. Families, households, krooms, villages, and towns, are now being broken up, and the effect that this step will have on the country in the course of a few months, commercially and socially, will be something fearful to contemplate.

22. In the face of the concessions granted by Governor Strahan, if it is proposed to entirely abolish slavery on the Gold Coast, your Memorialists would most respectfully and humbly urge their claims to compensation at your Majesty's hands for the breaking up of their homes and families, krooms, villages and towns, the loss of the services of their slaves and pawns, their plantations, which will become and are being ruined for the want of hands to cultivate them, and the immense sums expended by them in the purchase, support, and maintenance of those slaves, whom they bought and retained under the cognizance of your Majesty's authorities here who had recognized the institution as a lawful one.

Your Memorialists would also call attention to the fact that, although the Proclamation issued by Governor Strahan bears date the 17th December last, yet it was not promulgated in Cape Coast till the 30th day of December, the day on which your Memorialists forwarded the said Petition to his Excellency; the first intimation they had of the existence thereof was after they had sent in to Governor Strahan the said Petition, when they learnt that a Proclamation in reference to the slave and pawn question was being placarded about town. Whether any information had reached his Excellency previous to the Petition being presented to him, that your Memorialists were about forwarding a Petition or not on the subject-matter of the Proclamation that led to its publication, after it had been about two weeks in readiness, your Memorialists cannot say; but they would most humbly draw your Majesty's attention thereto.

23. Your Memorialists, therefore, pray that your most gracious Majesty in Council may be pleased to order the Proclamation bearing date the 17th December, 1874, issued by Governor Strahan, on the slave and pawn question, to be annulled and cancelled; and the Ordinances of the 17th December, 1874, repealed, in so far as neither of them are in the terms of the conditions granted them by Governor Strahan on the 3rd November last; and that an Ordinance, containing the terms and provisions as conceded to, and obtained by them on the 3rd November, 1874, be issued and passed; and that all slaves who have since obtained their emancipation, contrary to the terms and conditions so granted, your Memorialists, on the said 3rd November, 1874, be ordered to return to their masters, and to the villages, krooms, and towns they have deserted, unless they can prove cruelty or maltreatment; or, in case your Majesty should be pleased to give your gracious assent and allowance to the said Ordinances, that your Majesty will graciously order that compensation be granted and paid your Memorialists for the loss of the value of their slaves and pawns, the deprivation of their services, the ruin of their plantations, and the breaking up of their homes and families, krooms, towns, and villages, and for the absolute and unconditional emancipation of their slaves, and the release and discharge of their pawns; and your Memorialists, as in duty bound, will ever pray.

[Here follow 86 signatures and marks.]

Inclosure 2 in No. 2.

Petition to his Excellency Governor Strahan, dated December 30, 1874.

[Same as Inclosure in No. 1.]

Inclosure 3 in No. 2.

Sir,

Accra, January 2, 1875.

I HAVE the honour to report, for his Excellency's information, that quietness, good order, and a spirit of obedience to the laws and to the orders of the Government prevail throughout this district.

With reference to the recent abolition of slavery on the Gold Coast, and to the working of the scheme of emancipation, enunciated by his Excellency, it may not be out of place to make a few short remarks, which, I may observe, are not based upon conjecture or forecast, but are founded upon actual observation and experience.

1. Touching the peace and quietness of the country, I have to report that the present can favourably compare with any other period preceding the abolition.
2. That trade and industry have in no way been inimically influenced.
3. That the natives do not appear to be anxious as to the present, or uncertain or desponding as to the future.

4. That, as far as Accra is concerned, houses are being erected by the natives, and new native stores are being opened.

5. That no ties have been sundered save those that from their repugnancy to the servitor were a blight on his energies, of little value to the served, absolutely baneful in their influence on the community at large, and prejudicial to the moral and material progress of the country.

Lastly, to use his Excellency's own words retrospectively, no household has been ruined, no family has been broken up.

Trusting that his Excellency will not deem it amiss in my thus recording my experience of the working up to the present of the recent abolition of slavery.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

V. SKIPTON GOULDSBURY,

Acting Civil Commandant, Accra.

The Hon. the Colonial Secretary,
Cape Coast.

No. 3.

Governor Strahan to the Earl of Carnarvon.—(Received February 6.)

My Lord,

Government House, Cape Coast, January 8, 1875.

WITH reference to my despatches of the 3rd January and of the 8th January,* I have the honour to forward to your Lordship the accompanying document just received which is of a similar character to the inclosures of the despatches above quoted.

2. I may add that the persons whose names purport to be appended to this Petition are entirely unknown to me.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

GEO. C. STRAHAN.

Inclosure in No. 3.

Cape Coast, January 7, 1875.

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty in Council.

The humble Petition of the Undersigned ladies of the Gold Coast Protectorate,

Most respectfully sheweth,

THAT on the 3rd day of November last, his Excellency Governor Strahan convened a meeting in the Castle here of the Kings and Chiefs of the western districts of the Protectorate.

At this meeting, after his Excellency had delivered to the said Kings and Chiefs your Majesty's message on the slave and pawn question, his Excellency informed the Kings and Chiefs that, although no more slaves were to be purchased or sold and no more pawns to be taken in payment for debt, yet no slave could leave his master or mistress unless there was proof of cruelty or maltreatment, when such slave would be entitled to his or her freedom, and that the amount for which any person was pawned could be recovered on such person refusing to serve. These conditions were granted the said Kings and Chiefs without their having the opportunity of coming into town and ascertaining the views of the community on this subject for the purpose of submitting same for your Majesty's consideration.

To the no small surprise of your Petitioners, they now find and learn that his Excellency Governor Strahan has since been emancipating a number of their slaves on their application to be set free without any inquiry into the cause of such application, so long as the slaves declared that they would no longer serve their masters.

To your Petitioners this policy of Governor Strahan's is an excessive hardship. The whole of your Majesty's Petitioners more or less hold slaves and have pawns, whom they have bought with the fruits of their labours. This measure will be to deprive your Petitioners of the services of such slaves and pawns, and reduce them to a state of poverty.

Free labour is hardly obtainable on the Gold Coast, and generations must pass away ere such a market can be created and established here; therefore, to divest the slave and

* Nos. 1 and 2.

pawn-holding community of their proprietary rights in their slaves and pawns, will be to create such a disruption of family and household ties, to bring about such a stagnation of trade, to put such a sudden stoppage to the cultivation of palm oil and other plantations, as well as to other agricultural pursuits, besides breaking up krooms and villages, as will be awful to contemplate, even if matters assume no worse a feature.

Your petitioners bought these slaves with the view of making them, as they are, members of their households and families. There is no distinction worth speaking of between such slaves and the members of those families to which they belong. It is true that the menial services of the households fall to them as the share of the duties allotted to them as members of such families, but that is no greater hardship than such as servants in civilized countries have to undergo. In return for such services the slaves are maintained, supported, fed, and clothed by their masters, their debts are paid for them, and they have innumerable other advantages as fall not to the lot of menials in other more favoured countries.

The system and practice dates from time immemorial, and for Governor Strahan to endeavour thus suddenly and unconditionally to seek to abolish it for ever will, your petitioners fear, create complications as yet unforeseen. The injury, your petitioners would respectfully submit, the grievous wrong thus done to the whole community of the Gold Coast Protectorate by Governor Strahan in the face of the conditions granted by him to the Kings and Chiefs on the 3rd November last, and in direct opposition to the terms then mentioned, if not speedily remedied will make itself felt here both commercially and politically, as well as socially. It will in a measure cause pawns also to seek for their release and discharge as unconditionally as the slaves have obtained their freedom, as they have not the same advantages and privileges as have the slaves. They will refuse any longer to serve; and as the majority of them have pawned themselves or have been pawned for debts of their own, the pawnholders will have the satisfaction only of imprisoning and maintaining them whilst incarcerated, which is but poor satisfaction, and which will be but sinking more money in vain efforts to recover the original sum. This will be the case particularly with your petitioners, who will now have to perform the menial duties of their households themselves, since they all have not the means to hire and obtain the services of freed men or women, and numbers of them are entirely dependent on the services of their slaves and pawns, and have no other source of income excepting by and through such slaves and pawns.

Your Petitioners, therefore, having heard that the said Kings and Chiefs have in vain petitioned his Excellency Governor Strahan on the subject-matter hereof, and having learnt that the Kings and Chiefs of the Protectorate are about memorialising your Majesty thereon, feel it to be a duty owing to themselves and the community of which they form no mean a part, to petition your Majesty in support of the said Memorial, in the contents of which they heartily concur.

Wherefore your Petitioners most humbly pray that your Majesty in Council will be graciously pleased to order that the Proclamation issued by Governor Strahan on the slave and pawn question, bearing date the 17th December, 1874, be annulled and cancelled, and the Ordinances bearing same date be repealed in so far as neither of them is in the terms of the conditions granted by Governor Strahan to the said Kings and Chiefs on the 3rd November last; and that an Ordinance containing the terms and provisions as conceded to the said Kings and Chiefs be issued and passed, and that all slaves who have since obtained their freedom contrary to the terms and conditions so granted to the Kings and Chiefs on the 3rd day of November, be ordered to return to their masters, and to the villages, krooms, and towns which they have deserted, unless they can prove cruelty or maltreatment; or, in case your Majesty should be pleased to give your gracious assent and allowance to the said Ordinances, that your Majesty will graciously order that compensation be granted and paid your Petitioners for the loss of the value of their slaves and pawns, the deprivation of their services, the ruin of their plantations, and the breaking up of their homes and families, krooms, towns, and villages, and for the absolute and unconditional emancipation of their slaves, and the release and discharge of their pawns, and your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

[Here follow 2 signatures and 17 marks apparently by the same hand.]

The Earl of Carnarvon to Governor Strahan.

Sir,

Downing Street, February 19, 1875.

I HAVE the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your despatches of the 3rd January and of the 8th of the same month,* transmitting and commenting upon certain petitions purporting to be signed, or, in most cases, to be certified by the marks of Kings, Chiefs, Headmen, ladies, and others within the Gold Coast Protectorate, in which it is urged that the steps taken by you, in pursuance of the statement which you made on the 3rd of November, in last year, to the assembled Kings and Chiefs, should be annulled, and that the holders of slaves and pawns should be permitted to retain them unless upon proof of cruelty or maltreatment; or, in the event of this request not being acceded to, that compensation should be paid to the petitioners for the losses which they allege that they have sustained, or will sustain, through the operation of the Ordinances against which they appeal.

I did not fail at once to observe that the composition and language of these petitions, which are drawn with a great command of English, are in remarkable contrast to those which the persons purporting to be the petitioners are themselves in the habit of using when endeavouring to give expression to protests of this nature, and I cannot doubt that you are right in attributing these documents to some one or more of the educated Fantees, who have on previous occasions advocated their views on Colonial and other subjects in a similar manner.

I am led to this conclusion, in the first place, by the very clear and explicit manner in which you repeat the account originally given by you of your statement respecting the abolition of slavery, and in which you assure me that this account is corroborated by the unequivocal concurrence of those Kings and Chiefs whom you were able again to convene on the receipt of the petitions. I should, moreover, be forgetful of some important passages in the recent history of the Gold Coast if I did not bear in mind that on previous occasions (as, for example, in the case of the well-known scheme for a Fantee Confederation) some of the better educated natives have undertaken, without any sufficient authority, to make proposals and representations, equally well expressed with the present, which could be seriously entertained only if they emanated directly from the Kings and other persons in authority.

I also observe that there is a remarkable similarity between the incorrect report which was recently sent home to this country in Reuter's telegrams of your statement of the 3rd November respecting the abolition of slavery, and the corresponding passages (in the 1st and 5th paragraphs respectively) of the petitions now under reference.

It would appear not improbable that the report to which I have alluded as embodied in the telegrams may have come from the same source as the petitions; and the knowledge that a particular account had been published in England would not unnaturally suggest the expediency of basing any claims for consideration or compensation upon the statement that a similar understanding had been come to by the Memorialists.

I need not, however, further pursue this part of the subject, because, as I have already intimated, it is with the Kings and Chiefs, not with irresponsible natives, however clever or well educated, that Her Majesty's Government must deal; and I cannot hesitate to accept unreservedly your confident statements (which, from the first, have been thoroughly consistent and unwavering) of the manner in which your declarations have been received and understood by the recognized authorities in the Protectorate.

The reply which it is my duty to advise the Queen that you should be directed to give to the petitioners (if, indeed, there are any persons of importance remaining, after the explanations and repudiations which I have received, to whom a formal reply ought to be given) is a very simple one. It is that, having instructed you by the command of Her Majesty, and as I am persuaded with the universal concurrence of the people of this country, to take prompt steps for the eradication of a shameful institution from the Protectorate, this Government cannot for a moment listen to any arguments in favour of compromise or further delay.

In their personal relations with you the Kings and Chiefs appear to have throughout shown a proper sense of the very great benefits conferred upon them by the Queen in the rescue of their country from invasion, and themselves from slavery and death. And I at once absolve them from any conscious participation in so ill-advised and unworthy a sentiment as that contained in the 17th paragraph of the Petition to the Queen, in which they are made to say that "the late war was not a war of their own, and that the British

* Nos. 1, 2, and 3.

forces fought more to uphold and maintain the dignity of the British Empire than in defence of the people of the Gold Coast."

Those words will at once be generally repudiated, but they unfortunately represent too correctly that lamentable want of patriotism and public morality which have in times past characterized too many of the Gold Coast natives, and have rendered it so difficult either to govern or to defend the Fantees.

You will cause it to be known that the Queen has received the Petition addressed to Her Majesty with pain and surprise; that Her Majesty again commands you to advance steadily and firmly, but with all due consideration for any special circumstances, in the course upon which you have entered; and that she relies confidently upon the good feeling of the Kings and Chiefs, of which renewed evidence has been given at your late interview with them, and upon their cheerful consent on behalf of their people to such sacrifices as may be involved in the liberation of as many slaves and pawns as do not desire to remain in their present service.

It may not, perhaps, be superfluous to observe that in the same Petition in which great grievances are alleged and compensation is asked for, there is a long argument to prove that the condition of the slaves is excellent, that they receive every care and attention, and that instances of cruelty are exceedingly rare. On this I have only to observe that, if the statement is to be believed, I do not perceive the ground for the fear of any sudden interruption in the existing relations between master and slave.

It rests, in fact, with those who have hitherto kept persons in compulsory bondage to substitute for it that voluntary compact which alone can be permitted, and which the Petition shows that they can make acceptable to those dependent upon them.

The only other point to which I think it necessary to refer is the suggestion that compensation should be granted to the petitioners for the loss of their slaves and pawns. In your statement of the 3rd November you pointed out to the Kings and Chiefs that the Queen had, without assistance from the inhabitants of the Protectorate, and at a very great expenditure of life and money, delivered them from defeat and misery, that her object was not the repayment of any part of the money which had been expended, but that the return expected was obedience to the Queen's desire that slavery should be abolished. You will now inform the petitioners, in the same spirit, that in all that has been done for them they will find more than the equivalent of such sacrifices as some of them may now be called upon to make, and that it is difficult for the Queen to entertain seriously a request for money compensation from slaveholders who, but for her generous and prompt interference, would now be either dead or themselves subjected to a most cruel slavery.

In conclusion, I have only to observe that while I receive with confidence your continued assurances of the success of the steps already taken by you, I do not forget, as I am aware that you do not, that much remains to be done before the institution which it has been determined to abolish can be effectively replaced by other and better provisions for the cultivation of the soil, the interchange of trade, and the general improvement of the native races within the Protectorate.

I propose shortly to address to you some remarks on what appears to me to be the course generally most desirable for this end, and I shall probably learn before long what are your views on this portion of the subject.

I have, &c.
(Signed) CARNARVON.

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE relating to the
Abolition of Slavery on the Gold Coast.

(In continuation of C 1,139 of 1875.)



*Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Com-
mand of Her Majesty. February 9, 1875*

LONDON:
PRINTED BY HARRISON AND SONS.

Edm/s

(B.M. 10)
LONDON
HARRISON