

these so-called Negroid people inhabit both banks to-day suggests a fall in population. Though it has been suggested that they were brought from further south in the course of the slave trade, it is more probable that these river bank people established themselves on the Juba and also on the Webbi Shebelle where they are to-day, at an early period. Their ancestors may have lived and worked there before the ancestors of the Somalis arrived from Arabia. They may have occupied the whole of the area between the Juba and the Webbi Shebelle in former times, or even a much larger area.

All this is, of course, mere speculation. To-day the perpetuation of differences between them and their neighbours could only interest the anthropologist.

Perducchi described the river bank cultivators as "mostly free." This appears to refute other statements that slavery existed in this area when the Italians arrived. If anywhere in the Italian colonies servitude disappeared this was not due to humanitarian action by Italian Governments as Italian Ministers repeatedly stated that they would not attempt to abolish "domestic slavery."

Perducchi said these river bank people were careful not to go far from their homes owing to their fear of being captured and sold at the markets of Audele and Maublen, in the region of Merka.

Perducchi reported that the Sab people in the area between the rivers were in the habit of hiring the river bank agriculturalists to work for them. To ensure that the river people should be permitted to return home at the end of the season for cultivation in the Sab area, he used to commandeer some of the herds of the Sab people, as hostages.

It was in the coast towns and in the agricultural and mixed farming area near the coast, that "domestic" slavery was entrenched. If the reports concerning it by numerous witnesses can be held to be true, the only sense in which it could be described as "domestic" was that its victims were not just then being shipped abroad. They were alleged to be working under tragic conditions, wearing manacles and fetters.

Having described what was being done by the several European States to abolish slavery and the slave trade in various parts of Africa, the Chiesi-Travelli Report paid a tribute to British efforts: "England, be it said to her glory, holds the first place in the world, and is far beyond other nations in the fight against barbarism and slavery."

The Report then adds:

*"The localities in which the question of slavery is of greatest importance to us Italians are those of Zanzibar and Pemba, because they were till recent years under the Zanzibar administration, like our Benadir, because of their near vicinity to it, and by their ties of tradition, race and family with it. Fifteen years ago Zanzibar and Pemba were the greatest centres for furnishing slaves to Arabia and the Persian Gulf."*

Since Zanzibar and Pemba came under British protection, however, the status of slavery was abolished there. In the five years 1897-1901, 4,379 slaves were liberated by the Government on the island of Zanzibar and 9,492 on the island of Pemba, a total of 13,811. A further 3,776 were voluntarily freed by their owners, this meant 17,587 slaves were freed on the two islands in five years.

#### Italian Government Legalises and Whitewashes Slavery

The strong reports presented by the Italian Government's own Pestalozza Di Monali Commission and the Benadir Company's Chiesi-Travelli Commission appeared to call urgently for drastic reforms. The response of the Italian Government was surprisingly ineffective. Tittioni, the Minister responsible for the administration of the Colonies, on March 14, 1904, laid before the Chamber of Deputies the proposals of his Ministry for dealing with the problem of slavery in the Somaliland Colony. He declared that the vigilance of his government had entirely suppressed the trade in slaves, and that in the coast towns "slavery real and proper" had disappeared. This was untrue, for no action had yet been taken. He further claimed that only what he termed, "domestic slaves," now existed in the coast towns. Such slaves, he said, could not be bought and sold, though they were obliged to work for their masters, and when they worked elsewhere they had to pay the master on account of their earnings. He hoped to reduce this payment.

Where slavery in the old form still existed the efforts of the Italian Government would be directed towards transforming it into "domestic" slavery, as a step towards gradual abolition. He was totally opposed to immediate abolition, and declared:

*"It would be contrary to every principle of wisdom suddenly to abolish slavery in the interior; slaves would hasten to escape to the coast, and would create a serious economic disturbance, throwing into the walls of the cities of the coast thousands of persons unaccustomed to provide for themselves, and at the mercy of their bad inclinations."*

The question he considered "very delicate."

Consul-General Mercatelli had been given power to negotiate with the chiefs of the Bimal tribes to establish regulations which would lead to the gradual transformation of regular slavery into domestic slavery. The slaves attached to the tribes of the interior were to be:—

*"Considered domestic servants, bound to their masters by a uniform contract of labour, by which the servant's work is paid by board and lodging in ordinary circumstances, as well as in sickness, and old age."*

The children of slaves were not to be bound by the contract which bound their fathers and mothers; they were to have their own labour contracts.

The masters were to treat their slaves humanely, and grant them liberty to work some days on their own account, whereby they