

**ACCOUNT OF THE SLAVERY OF
FRIENDS IN THE BARBARY
STATES, TOWARDS THE CLOSE
OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY**

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Account of the Slavery of Friends in the Barbary States, Towards the Close of the Seventeenth Century by Edward Garrard Marsh

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EDWARD GARRARD MARSH

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ACCOUNT
OF THE
SLAVERY OF FRIENDS
IN THE
BARBARY STATES,
TOWARDS
THE CLOSE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

WITH
SOME PARTICULARS OF THE EXERTION OF THEIR BRETHREN AT
HOME FOR THEIR REDEMPTION, &c. &c.

"They are compelled to carry heavy burdens on their heads
running from sun-rising to sun-setting, with brutish black boys
following with whips and stripes at their pleasure."—p. 14.

Smith 739

LONDON:
EDWARD MARSH, 84, HOUNDSDITCH.

1848.

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NOTICE TO THE READER.

IN revising the volume, containing a Selection from the Letters of George Fox, with a view to a new edition, those addressed to the captive Friends on the coast of Barbary, claimed the particular notice of the Editor, and he thought that not a few of the readers of those Letters would desire some further information relative to the parties to whom they were addressed. With a view to supply this want, (knowing that the case of the sufferers had been under the Society's care,) he obtained, from the Meeting for Sufferings, copies of its Minutes, and of those of the Yearly Meeting, relative to their case. The whole collection appeared to him so interesting, as an illustration of the slavery of Englishmen in Africa, as well as of the judicious care of a Christian community over its members, that he could not persuade himself to compress the matter into a note suitable to append to the letters in question.

It has therefore been thought best to print in a separate form a great portion of the Minutes which had been extracted from the Society's records, with a few words of introductory information relative to the slavery of Europeans on the coast of Barbary.

N.B.—In the extracts which are given from the records, the letters Y. M. signify Yearly Meetings Minutes, and M. S., Meeting for Sufferings—Y. M. E. refer to the extracts from the printed Epistles.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT, &c.

THE degree in which Christianity has prevailed in Europe, very imperfectly as its kindly influences have been permitted to operate, has probably tended to the abandonment of the practice of making slaves of prisoners of war who were united with their conquerors in the profession of a common faith. It is not surprising, however, that the Barbary states, professing the religion of Mahomet which sanctions or even directs the most brutal conduct towards infidels, should enslave their prisoners of the Christian profession taken in war; and that they should also (with their rude and piratical character) make the procuring of European slaves a great object of their robbing expeditions. Professed Christians, however, have nothing to boast of, for if they did not make slaves of their fellow-professors, the Mahomedans acted upon the same principle—they did not make slaves of their brethren. And if they treated the *infidels* with rigour and cruelty, the Christians, so called, treated the Pagans and Mahomedans of Africa with similar rigour and cruelty: so that the question may fairly be asked, "Are ye better than they?"

The power of the Barbary states was at its height about 300 years ago. Their corsairs became the scourge of Christendom, while their much-dreaded system of slavery

assumed a front of new terrors. Their ravages were not confined to the Mediterranean: they penetrated the ocean, and pressed even to the Straits of Dover and the Irish Channel. From the chalky cliffs of England, and even from the distant western coasts of Ireland, the inhabitants were swept into cruel captivity.* Several attempts were made, either to abate or remove this terrible nuisance by England, France, and Holland; but without complete success, until the year 1816. At that period, by negotiation in the first place, and subsequently by the terrible bombardment of Algiers by Lord Exmouth, upwards of 3000 christian slaves were liberated from captivity.

In the early times of the Society of Friends, there appear to have been a considerable number of mariners convinced of their principles, and it was no doubt from this class, that the poor captives whom George Fox addresses were chiefly taken. Under the vigorous government of the Protector, in the year 1655, all British slaves were liberated, and the attacking of English vessels stopped; but under the vicious and feeble reign of Charles II., the Algerines resumed their attacks upon British vessels, and a great many Englishmen were placed in captivity.

We do not meet with a notice of any Friends being in this state until 1679, in the early part of which year, a minute occurs in the proceedings of the Meeting for Sufferings, directing—

“That the case of Friends taken captive by the Algerines be laid before the next General Yearly Meeting, in order to consider of their redemption.”

The subject was accordingly brought under the notice of the Yearly Meeting, held the 10th of Fourth Month, 1679,

* From an instructive and eloquent Lecture on White Slavery in the Barbary States. By Charles Sumner. Boston. 1847.

and it was agreed, that it be left to the Meeting for Sufferings in London, for them as they see cause to recommend the case of the sufferers to the country and city, for a contribution, in order for their redemption out of slavery. A letter, dated 14th of Sixth Month, 1679, was sent down to the Midsummer Quarterly Meetings; and notwithstanding the suffering condition of Friends, in almost all parts of England—the pillage, confiscation, and imprisonments to which they were then exposed—the appeal was speedily and liberally responded to. The letter is as follows:—

“ From the Meeting for Sufferings in London to the Quarterly Meeting of ———

“DEAR FRIENDS AND BRETHREN.—According to the consent and appointment of our last Yearly Meeting, we lay before you the consideration of the sad state and suffering of several of our friends taken by the Turks, and now in captivity in Algiers. Since the said Meeting we have seen divers letters from them, and discoursed with some of their relations, and, weightily considering their state and condition, are stirred up in our hearts to use means for their redemption. We have accordingly some weeks past taken orders for the redeeming two whose ransom is set at £220. Some more are known of, that are there who are not able to deliver themselves; we are also informed of another ship lately taken, coming from Virginia, wherein are more Friends, and more we may expect to hear of, so that it may and doth, especially if we make their case our own, occasion bowels of compassion to arise for their relief and deliverance from a sort of men more inhuman, cruel, and brutish, than some beasts. Dear Friends, as we live and abide in that brotherly love and kindness which at first we were endued withal, and which very plentifully sprang up in our hearts one towards another, we need not many words to stir