

# What is Slavery?

## AN APPEAL TO WOMEN

BY

C. NINA BOYLE

PAMPHLET

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The opportunity is at hand for a great triumph, or a great betrayal.

WHICH IS IT TO BE?

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Boyle

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Calcutta House  
Old Castle Street  
London E1 7NT

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My warm thanks are due to Mrs. E. D. Hutchinson, by whose generous help this pamphlet is published; and I acknowledge most gratefully the encouragement, sympathy and publicity given me by the Committee and the Editors of the *Shield*, who for long years have sought to abolish the worst features of the worst form of Slavery. I also pay a grateful tribute to the Rt. Hon. Josiah Wedgewood, M.P., Miss Eleanor Rathbone, M.P., Miss Emily Leaf, and Mrs. Ogilvie Gordon, D.Sc., Ph.D.; also to Mme. Maria Veroné and later the Executive of the Women's Freedom League, who gave me my first opportunities of placing the facts before the public.

## WHAT IS SLAVERY?

In 1925, fifty-six National representatives at Geneva drew up the League of Nations' Slavery Convention, a document which endorsed, consolidated and brought up to date all previous agreements and enactments for the abolition of Slavery. This Convention pledges its signatory nations to put down, and to help each other put down Slavery "in all its forms."

The Convention contains a definition of Slavery, which is as free from ambiguity as the Convention itself. "Slavery," it is thereby declared, "is the status of a person over whom all or any of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised." Nothing could be more explicit. And the Convention has been ratified by upwards of thirty-two of the Governments whose representatives drew up the form.

The result of such an agreement one might suppose, would be, that where civilised writ runs and where international order reaches, no person will be allowed to own nor dispose of the person of another. And it would also seem that considerable ingenuity would have to be exercised to find a loophole for evasion. Such a loophole—indeed, several loopholes—have nevertheless been found, if not actually provided by deliberate arrangement.

It became plain at a very early date that there were "forms" of Slavery the Convention was not intended to cover; and its framers, and the Governments they represent, have no intention of abolishing, or even of condemning them. So that, while the principle is being established as firmly as possible that none may own nor dispose of the person of a man, and more particularly of the person of a wage-earner, we find ourselves forced to conclude that the principle may be equally firmly established under this Convention that the person of a woman may be lawfully and properly owned and disposed of so long as she be not a recognised wage-earner.

In the reports and recommendations preliminary to the drawing up of the Convention, no faintest allusion was made to the Report on the Traffic in Women—the grossest form of Slavery—already lying in the pigeon-holes of the Palais des Nations. And the late Mr. Grimshaw, who drew up certain schedules, skated cautiously over what he described as "bona-fide marriage customs"—a phrase I quote but do not pretend to interpret. He explained the difficulty he had found to distinguish between these customs and Slavery; the difficulty being, I would suggest, to find any trace in these customs of anything that is *not* Slavery. It is quite evident that Mr. Grimshaw recognised the nature of these customs. It is equally evident that he and his fellow-workers on the Convention were in no way shocked by them.

It is safe to say that there is no more widespread and deep-seated social convention than that women have no real right to personal freedom. Over the greater part of the world, it is the custom to dispose of them, from infancy onwards, for profit, lust, or convenience. No amount of coercion nor restraint, unless actually torn from their homes against the will of their owners and guardians, constitutes slavery for women within the meaning of the Convention. Once more the old expedient will serve, that a woman is not entitled to be a "person" for purposes of claiming an advantage; and in this second quarter of the twentieth century it would seem that she is to be robbed of even the forlorn protection of the word Slave.

There has been a brisk revival of anti-slavery propaganda during the last few years. It is traceable to the efforts of the International Labour Bureau of the League of Nations, which has issued reports on the prevalence of Forced Labour—a grave and admitted evil. Publicity was solicited under the heading of Slavery. Meetings and conferences were held under the ægis of the League of Nations' Union. The Anti-Slavery Society took part. The Institute of International Affairs called its members to the discussion of the question. The Archbishop of Canterbury presided on a widely advertised occasion. And at each and every such gathering the definition from the Slavery Convention was quoted.

At no single one of these meetings has there been any allusion to the forms of Slavery that affect women only; and a dispassionate survey of this new campaign forces one to the conclusion that it is not a campaign against Slavery as Slavery. It is not a protest against the right of any human being to own and dispose of another human being. It is not Christian. It is not strictly humanitarian. It is in its inception and its action a political and an economic campaign aimed at those forms of Slavery which supply cheap and unpaid labour—labour which cuts across industry and wages. And it works out at this, that its originators are content that the men who must on no account be allowed to be slaves shall be protected, and reinforced by legislation, in the possession of their own slaves.

The forms of Slavery of which women alone are victims are in two classes. One is the traffic for purposes of immorality. It is cloaked in that conspiracy of silence which was broken by the gallant Josephine Butler, but is still only half dispelled. It is segregated in a class apart and does not come under Anti-Slavery enactments. It is dealt with at Geneva by an omnibus Commission, not by the Slavery Committee. It has a special report (pigeon-holed until a further report from the Far East shall be received), which is not presented to nor considered by Slavery Committees or Commissions. The Anti-Slavery protagonists who are roused to frenzy by accounts of the Mui-tsai of Hong Kong, sold into domestic slavery for a term of years and then resold as wives or concubines, are strangely insensitive to the fate of

the little girls of Japan, sold, pawned or contracted to the Yoshi-Wara or Red Light quarters of Tokio, and other Japanese towns and ports. It is computed that these wretched girls supply the demands of upwards of twenty-seven millions of men of all nationalities every year.\* There are over eleven thousand keepers and owners who batten on them. No meetings have been held about it, in this new campaign. No one has told how the penned-in victims, numbering thousands, were abandoned to their fate in the great fire of Tokio after the earthquake, and roasted alive in their pens. No one has called a meeting to protest against the even more hideous fact that they have all been replaced. No notice is taken, even at Geneva, of their piteous pleas for release. The Archbishops have presided over no meetings to strengthen the hand of the Commission of Enquiry now visiting the Far East, nor to demand freedom for the little girls purchased for prostitution in the temples of India. The Anti-Slavery Society has not approached the India Conference on their behalf. These girls compete in no industrial market; they are not a danger to Labour. They are not slaves, for purposes of the Convention and the League's Labour Bureau.

The other form of special Slavery for women, so carefully evaded by Mr. Grimshaw, is the traffic for purposes of marriage, to enable men to have heirs, to perform their tribal or their religious ceremonial, or to gratify their lust under the cover of decorum. It is swathed in suffocating folds of sentiment and respectability; but I question if the traffic for immorality holds more of shame and suffering, of cruelty and slavery at its worst, than the traffic for marriage. Obviously, it affects an infinitely larger number of women.

The foulest form of this traffic is child marriage. It flourishes in its worst form in India, but is found in Muslim and Pagan communities of Africa as well as Asia. For a variety of reasons, of which the most easily understood are the social convention that it is *comme il faut*, and the religious conviction that it is a man's duty to give a daughter in marriage (just as it is his duty and his need to beget a son), infant girls in India are hustled into marriage from their cradles. When the bridegroom is a little boy of the same age, the situation is not so desperate, although the fact must never be lost sight of that the little boy is in the position of having something given to him, for his use or indulgence; the little girl is in the position of being the something given. The horror begins when a small child is given to a grown man, to an elderly man, to a hoary dotard, to a cruel and lustful brute.

There is no escape. There is no protest possible. It is a life sentence. And when one thinks of the indignation in this country if a criminal

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\* In Japan, such a life is not held wholly in ignominy. It is even reckoned to be honourable and virtuous if a girl take to it to support aged parents or to pay family debts; and a person who sells a daughter to it can still hold up his head in society.

assault is committed on a little girl, and then reflects that these millions of little girls are condemned to it at birth, are bred for it, are sent to it as sheep to the shambles, it is permissible to ask What *is* Slavery, if this be not Slavery? The death roll is enormous; and there is a still greater roll of permanent injury and mutilation. Besides which, when a girl is married to an elderly man of a Hindu community, she has to face the almost certain prospect, if she herself survive, of being a widow, with all the revolting cruelties and indignities of that condition.

Women doctors have told us of the physical results of this slave trade—quite, quite as horrible as that of Abyssinia and of Liberia. Now the tale of it is being told by Indians in India. The Joshi Report gives chapter and verse, from all over India, of this *bona fide* marriage custom. Do the Slavery Convention's signatories know of any worse form of slavery?

Marriages by purchase are common in India, as well as the ceremonial marriages that must be paid for. I heard on the authority of a police officer who intervened, of a child of eleven, purchased as wife by a leprous beggar of over seventy, so disfigured by disease as to be an object of loathing. No law, no public opinion, operated to protect this child slave or to snatch her from so hideous a fate. In Sind, owing to the heavy mortality among the wretchedly ill-used young mothers, there is a shortage of women; and a lucrative trade has sprung up in kidnapping women for sale. I have seen a cutting from a paper published in the capital town, in which a writer deplored that responsible men should be so anxious to have a wife who would bear a son that they did not satisfy themselves of the *bona fides* of those who offered them women for sale. It did not shock the writer that women should be offered for sale; only that they should be purchased without the precaution of finding out if the seller had a right to sell them. The position of women in this Mohammedan province may be gauged by the fact that stolen women can be safely and freely sold after being stolen.

All over India women and girls may be bought and sold—for the temples, for foul shrines as substitutes for girls of "respectable" families, for marriage, for concubines. Yet, in spite of these undenied and undeniable facts, a dinner was given by the British India Society a year or two ago, with Lord Reading in the chair, to Sir Harcourt Butler, who allowed himself to be congratulated on having "put down the last vestiges of slavery in India." This statement, made in the presence of many to whom the facts are well known, was repeated recently by the mouthpiece of the Anti-Slavery Society, at the Institute of International Affairs. What, then, is Slavery?

In very many parts of Africa, the native woman is so completely "property" that she is not only purchased and bartered, but inherited. Unmarried girls whose fathers die, are assessed among the divisible goods to be shared by the male heirs. They may be used to pay a debt or a compliment, to cement a bargain, to please a friend, to

placate an enemy. No man may have a wife without paying her owner a price which in some places has a maximum fixed by law.

In the Union of South Africa, white legislation has supplemented native custom in creating a situation which is as scandalous as anything that could be imagined. I will deal with the custom first.

A girl may be and often is allowed to choose the man likely to be willing to pay for her. But it frequently happens that the man she likes is outbid by someone else; or that she is selected to be one of some collection of "wives" for an old chief. There is one in the Northern Transvaal who has eighty. Sometimes a bargain is made before she is born—"your first girl for my first boy," "your next girl against your debt to me;" "my next girl against the wife who ran away from you" (this rather than pay back the price of the absconding wife). These girls are born mortgaged. Part of the price, in cattle, is paid on their birth. If they will not carry out the bargain willingly, they are thrashed into it. They have been paid for and are owned.

Sometimes a girl will go to a man who cannot pay up the full price. Her owner has the right at any time to take her away. She does not "belong" to the other man until he has paid in full. Fathers make a foul profit by trading their girls to one after another of such men, thus getting a great deal more in the long run than by one finished transaction. In this country it would be called profiting by the daughter's enforced immorality. In the Union it is upheld by the Courts. "The powers attaching to the right of ownership" may be exercised over a woman in any way her owner pleases, provided he do not intentionally kill her. An account of the shameful rights of the owners of native women, and the way they are exercised, and the support given to the slave-owning by Administrative officials, may be found in the Report of the Select Committee of the Senate of the Union Parliament, 1913, on Native Custom and Marriage Law. There was no woman on the Committee, and not one woman called as a witness, yet it makes a shocking indictment.

In Natal, the Native Code lays down the price that may be asked for a girl wife. Having fixed the price, the Code then remarks that women are not to be considered as chattels, which is almost humorous. A native woman may not appear in the Natal Courts as claimant or complainant: she may only appear as prisoner. She must claim and complain through her "guardian" only, even if it be against him she wish to complain. Recently, I have seen a case from a Natal Court in which a woman in custody was charged with "wandering from her kraal." The "wandering" was that she had gone to live with a man who could not pay for her, and her owner demanded her return. In spite of her vehement protests, to which no one paid the least heed, the magistrate ordered her to be returned to her father until paid for. It is to be noted that no age protects them from this ownership. It is for life. They never belong to themselves from their cradles to their graves.

Should a Christian and educated girl desire to marry in civilised fashion, she has first to secure the consent of her owner, and then she and he and the intending husband have to attend at the nearest magistrate's court—which may entail a tramp of twenty or even sixty miles—and make a declaration that the provisions of the Native Code, in regard to the payment of the legal *lobolo*, have been complied with to the owner's satisfaction. If this be not done, no marriage is a marriage legally for the native girl, although a native man is under no such disability.

If a man die, leaving several wives, they are inherited by the next of kin, who can cohabit with them himself, even if they were the wives of his father (all but his actual mother); or he may farm them out to others to produce children for him. If a wife run away from her husband he owns every child she may have by the other man; he has bought her and her child-bearing capacity. If a girl, destined for a certain boy, is born some years before him, she will be given to one of his uncles until he is ready for her. Before paying over the bride-price, the purchaser will often insist on a drastic examination of the girl's physical condition in ways impossible to put into print. In some cases she has to be lent to him before he will pay.

Yet, when one voices a protest, the answer that will come as surely as night follows day is: "These women *must* be kept under control, or *they might take to a life of immorality.*" One asks—in vain—what is immorality?

In the Basuto—a Reservation in the heart of South Africa where no Europeans may live or trade—an Act was passed in 1915, called Native Women Restriction Act, Basutoland. By it, no native woman may cross the frontiers—into the other Union territories—without the sanction of her "natural guardian," *i.e.*, her owner. If she does so, she is liable to a fine of £5 or three months' imprisonment. Should such a woman escape, any one knowing of her condition can detain her and take her back to where she belongs, like a lost dog or a strayed cow. The Act was signed by Lord Buxton, Governor-General, and Sir Cecil Rodwell, Imperial Secretary.

The reason given was "so many girls run away from the marriages arranged for them, and it makes trouble among the men, and must be stopped." Later on the excuse was varied; "the women only run away because they want to take to a life of immorality."

It is the fashion to declare that these women are too well treated to have a grievance. I will deal with that later. It is also said that the bride-price is a great protection, since no man will pay for damaged goods, and it ensures them good treatment in childhood—much as the stalled animal that is fatted for market. It is a lamentable result of so many generations of white rule, that the sole protection for a native girl should be that she is marketable goods. The price she fetches is nevertheless the sole peg on which the native South African girl can hang a shred of pride.

I will now deal with the legislation. There is a fiction that everyone, native or white, comes of age at 21. No native woman is allowed the benefit of this, unless she know it, which is rare, and can fight for it, which is almost impossible. By the Treaty of Protectorate, the Bechuana chiefs stipulated there should be no coming of age for their women.

In 1868, by a High Court decree, the godly Boers declared that it was *contra bonos mores* to countenance polygamy. "Instead, however, of declaring that only the first purchased woman should be the legal wife, it was decided that none should be wives." So, as the girls cannot prevent themselves being purchased even if they want to, they are in the position of purchased concubines; and any man who has bought one or more may go to a magistrate's court or a church and marry by white law a totally different woman who will be his only legal wife. The purchased girls have no redress, and the man will still own and sell their daughters. But, so that the male element shall not have a grievance, Succession Acts have been passed to enable the sons of the woman who may not be wives, to inherit the tribal property as if they were legitimate.

(The Natal "Native Code" accepts the purchase as marriage; but Zululand with its heavy native population does not come under it. The Union is a patchwork quilt of marriage and non-marriage areas.)

In 1927, two years after the Slavery Convention had been offered to the world, the Union Government passed a Native Administration Act. This Act lays down the provision a native must make for any purchased girls, if he subsequently to the purchase marries another woman legally. The Act, therefore, clearly recognises the fact that the girls are purchased concubines, not wives. And to make its position plain in the question of *bonos mores*, the Government sets up by this same Act, Courts of Native Commissioners to deal with disputes among natives, and instructs them that they are to administer native custom or law as they find it, "providing it shall not be repugnant to public policy or natural justice; provided further that no such Court shall hold *lobolo* or *bogadie* or any such custom to be repugnant to such principles." *Lobolo* and *bogadie* are among the terms for bride-price; so that white legislation has now snatched from the purchased concubines the one possibility of protesting against their condition, if educated and Christianised. But these girls must be kept under control, or they might "take to a life of immorality."

It must be clearly understood that when a wife is purchased, she is not supported by her purchaser. She has to support him, herself and her children on the plot of tribal land allotted to her. If he works at mines or harbours, she has no claim on his wages; in many cases he uses the money to buy another wife. When he has as many as will keep him in comfort, he ceases to work—unless he has taken a fancy to town life, in which case there is nothing to prevent him leaving his

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wives for long terms. The captive women of the Basuto are victims of these conditions to a serious extent.

Under the Chartered Company's rule, the Native Marriage Ordinance of Southern Rhodesia, 1917, was passed—an Act superior to any other legislation of the sub-continent in the protection it affords to marriageable girls. It places on the "guardian" the onus of registering an intended marriage, and on the Registering Officer the duty of satisfying himself that the girl is a freely consenting party. The Act for the protection of children—applying to white, coloured and native alike—holds the age of childhood to be under sixteen; and as the Marriage Ordinance is made out in terms of "woman," it may be that it abolishes, legally, child marriage, though there is nothing to that effect in either Act. The defects of this kind of legislation, however, are that (a) there does not seem to be any provision that the Registering Officer shall not delegate his authority to native officials, as is done by the Natal magistrates charged with a similar duty and which reduces the protection to zero; and (b) it establishes, by its insistence on the "guardian's" position in all such transactions, that the existence of an independent woman making a contract for herself is not even contemplated. "Guardian" is a euphemism commonly used for "owner"; and although there have been many prosecutions under this Act, and it is honestly meant and administered, it emphasises rather than denies the slave position of the woman.

The main duty of the purchased girl is to have children. Like the unhappy little Indian wife, it is when she is performing this indispensable service that she feels the full weight of Slavery. A conference which has been called at Geneva by the Save the Children International Union on African Child Welfare has had some evidence placed before it of the treatment inflicted on girls during confinement. The tale of cruelty is almost unbelievable, and it is set out in detail by several of the medical members of the Conference, who attribute to it and to the merciless and over-heavy toil to which the girls are kept right up to and immediately after confinement, the terrible death roll of mother and child.

A prolonged or difficult confinement is considered proof that a wife—often aged only twelve or fourteen, or even younger—has committed misconduct. Treatment of the utmost rigour is applied to extort confession, the husband looking on unpityingly. One medical witness testifies to arriving to find the young wife being slowly strangled by the husband, to force admission of an offence of which she had never dreamed. There is no enquiry, no punishment, for these murders. "The powers attaching to the right of ownership" are recognised and are exercised inexorably, and the man does what he wills with his own. Nor has any European administration over these people ever made it an offence to ill-treat a girl in childbirth or to practise midwifery on such lines.

Nevertheless, when the Mandates' Commission sat in 1929, Lord Lugard called on Mr. Jardine, an Administrative Official of Uganda, to give an account of the condition of native African women, "in view of statements which had been made," likening those conditions to Slavery. Mr. Jardine painted a rosy picture of women whose conditions compared favourable with those of white women, and whose freedom was so excessive that, indeed, it might have to be curtailed. Mr. Jardine qualified his statement by applying it to the women of Uganda and of all the African countries "of which he had any knowledge." It must be premised his knowledge does not extend far; perhaps not beyond Uganda and Tanganyika. In these two territories such rights as the women have are well preserved, and the European administration deals out a measure of protection, although the medical reports give the same tale of excessively burdensome work and cruel treatment of the woman in confinement.

What neither Mr. Jardine nor Lord Lugard called pointed attention to was Southern Nigeria, of which Lord Lugard was Governor, and of which he has written in his book, "The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa." This omission was perhaps discreet. Lord Lugard's attitude to things in general may be judged by his admiration of Koranic or Muslim law, his footnote that "Slavery in China assumes a mild form," and his approval of the public flogging of women for infidelity, with "safeguards" against over-severity. With these safeguards, he thinks the practice "salutary," and should be retained; the point to be stressed being that no woman has any protection against her husband's infidelity, seeing that he may have four wives and as many concubines as he can induce to come to his establishment.

In dealing with the freeing of slaves, he says: "They (male slaves) . . . are at liberty to assert their freedom and offer themselves as labourers for wages. . . . The case of women is complicated by questions of marriage, concubinage, dowries and divorce. . . ." "The rights claimed over the person of a woman by reason of her status as a slave are complicated by the rights claimed over her as wife or concubine, based, it may be, on payment of the 'dowry.'" He expresses this very peculiar opinion, where a woman slave has paid a ransom for her freedom, "the ransom money is indeed often an *equitable return* from a household slave for the maintenance she has received in her master's house." The italics are mine.

The freeing of concubines is the sorest point, it appears, in the emancipation business. Lord Lugard explains that the Arabs often find "the wives of their own race are sterile, and they desire concubines of the more virile African races to bear their children"—the concubines not being allowed, this seems to say, even to call their children their own. The question of the concubine seems to affect the morale of everyone brought into contact with it; for we are told in an account of

the Emancipation Act of Zanzibar in 1897 that concubines were exempted from its benefits, and that when the Under-Secretary in the House was asked a question on the subject, he said it was on the recommendation of a young man who represented the Anti-Slavery Society. It would seem indeed that women may not have the privilege of being really slaves, if being a slave means gaining freedom.

A woman slave who pays her ransom finds herself, not free, but in the custody of the Government, who may place her in a mission or in some other form of restraint until a husband (*a bona fide* owner) is found for her. In a footnote Lord Lugard remarks: "We can hardly be surprised that the forcible detention of a freed woman and her recapture by force if she escapes from a mission, should be confusing to the mind of her late owner." And to other minds as well.

The custom of purchasing wives is well established. We read: "It is obviously difficult to distinguish between the sale of a girl by her parents, and their acceptance of large presents to consent to her marriage or concubinage." Of the Pagan or non-Muslim; "it is perhaps even more difficult to distinguish between the payment of dowry and the purchase of a female slave . . . so engrained and so universal is the conception of wife purchase, that I fear it will be long before the process of education will effect the emancipation of women."

Old women, he tells us, also purchase "wives." They pay the bride-price—which disposes completely of the pretty myth that bride-price is not purchase—and become absolute owners of the girls, whom they put to the heavy work of portage that men refuse to undertake. This work of portage takes terrible toll of the girls in childbirth. A further disgusting profit is made by proceeding against men for adultery with the "wives." In South Africa there are also cases of sterile wives buying "wives" whose children belong to the buyer—as in the days of Jacob and Rachael.

A further endearing custom is when two or more men buy a wife among them; or when a man borrows money to buy a wife. Until the loan is repaid, the wife belongs to the lender as well as the borrower. "The powers attaching to the right of ownership" are exercised mercilessly, and the wretched girls are often killed among them by brutal excesses. It is not punishable; they have only injured their own property.

I have searched among all this for signs of that excessive freedom that Mr. Jardine fears he may have to curtail. It seems to me he will have a tough job to find anything more to lop off. Perhaps his mind was straying to British Togoland? In a recent official Report on that territory, I read that the women there, who have this advantage that they are not married in childhood, are refusing in large numbers to get married at all. The Report says with much frankness that it is on account of the treatment they receive when married. The male community is now asking that it shall be made an offence for a woman

to refuse to marry. So we may have another Native Women Restriction Act, and the women of British Togoland, like the women of the Basuto, will find their one way of escape closed.

In the French North African colonies, where the populations are mainly Muslim, women are owned and dealt with, if possible, with more completeness and severity. Little girls find a ready market and their sale to old men furnishes lucrative business. There are officials of the Courts whose function is to take charge of women over whose ownership there is a dispute; and I have been told, by a woman barrister, of a case in which a young woman, left an orphan and brought up by a Mission, was claimed by a man whom she had never seen before as the wife bought for him by his father when they were babies. The young woman was trained as a teacher, and had married another native teacher, with whom she was living as an educated and civilised person; she was taken from her Christian husband, and held in the custody of the Court until her identity was proven. The law—which is in open contravention of all anti-slavery agreements—was perfectly clear. She "belonged" to the man whose father had paid for her, and she was given to him. If this is not Slavery, it is at all events a close imitation; but as it is one of Mr. Grimshaw's *bona fide* marriage customs, there is no rescue for the victim.

A friend of mine was witness to the savage punishment inflicted on girls who escape custody. A child of twelve was seen in the streets, a huge spiked metal ball chained to her ankle, her head shaven—the worst of insults; and followed by a jeering, hooting crowd who spat and pelted. She had committed, this poor child who might not shelter under the word child any more than under the word slave, the unpardonable offence of going out without her veil; and now she was disgraced, and no man would pay for her, so her father was making an example of her. The French Moroccan officials do not appear to have interfered; they maintain native customs even while they pretend to have put down Slavery. But they do not pretend very hard.

Mr. Powell, a well-known American writer and traveller, has written several works of travel; and in a recent one on the Barbary Coast and the French Colonial Empire, he deals chattily with the Slavery problem. There are recognised slave agents, he tells us, in Morocco, to whom any one who wants a slave can get access. So long as negotiations are not too open, the French officials "turn a discreet eye" in the other direction. I do not gather that Mr. Powell, travelling with his wife and daughter, was overwhelmingly disapproving; the slaves, of course, were girls. He is unequivocally enthusiastic about the rigid Red Light regulation and control, with all its most ferocious features.



Egypt has not followed the example of Turkey. Here one may find surviving heartily the grossest forms of restraint for women—close seclusion, corporal punishment, and other rigours. Child marriage is rampant among the populations of working and country districts; a medical report tells of pitiful helpless mothers of ten and twelve years of age, with the usual results of death, disease and debilitation on a wide scale for mother and child.

Young men held a protest meeting, not very long ago, in Damascus, to protest against the profiteering in brides by greedy parents of marriageable girls. Prices had been raised so prohibitively that young men could not compete; the elderly and aged, and the wealthy, were those who could afford the young wives. The young men did not ask for freedom of choice for the young women. They only asked for moderate prices for themselves.

The Anti-Slavery Society tells me this is none of their business. The Council of the League of Nations, and the Committees and Commissions who present and consider Reports on Slavery—overwhelmingly men who in their own countries do not so much as contemplate, let alone approve of, liberty for women—will not make it their business either.\* The women who have gone from this country

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\* The attitude of the League and its constituent members towards the instrument they have forged, is interesting. The demand for a Permanent Commission on Slavery has been more than once rejected; and there is strong opposition to the efforts to secure the appointment of women to the temporary Commission. A Commission of Enquiry has been sent to Liberia, and representations have been made to Abyssinia. Both these countries provide wide fields for male slave labour, slave markets and slave recruiting. The League's attitude to China is different.

In 1928, China had been elected to the coveted seat on the Council, and the Chinese representative was elected President. On January 31st of that year, the *Morning Post's* representative cabled, as indicating the economic stringency, that the price of girl children had fallen to below five dollars; and Mr. MacKenzie, a New Zealand missionary, stated that in his district alone, over 80,000 women and girl children had been sold in that year. No question was asked, no representations were made, by any of his colleagues, of their Chinese President at Geneva, to establish the responsibility of the Chinese Government for the safety of these women. In 1931, China again occupied prominently the attention of the League. On November 8th of that year, Mr. G. Findlay Andrew, a China Inland missionary, returned home on leave but hurrying back because of the urgency of the calls on him, stated in an interview published in the *Observer* that he had seen "strings of girls" being offered or offering themselves for sale at a price of 2s. for each year of their age. "But," he says, "the market was soon glutted."

These are famine and emergency conditions, one recognises; but one asks—in vain—why no word has been spoken at Geneva touching the fate of these marketable goods? Why buys? What becomes of them? Is it because their destination is concubinage or the brothel, and not the Labour Market, that they are not to be considered "slaves" for purposes of the Convention or its liberationists?

as delegates or alternates have not made it their business. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom has concerned itself with Peace and with Minorities, but not with women. His Grace of Canterbury, placed in possession of some of the facts on the eve of the so-called Anti-Slavery meeting called by the League of Nations' Union at which he was to preside, answered me with curious evasion that, of course, he was aware of many lamentable customs, but I would hardly expect him to discuss them with me by correspondence; and preserved the usual silence at the meeting. And when Lady Simon wrote her deeply moving book, no information on the facts I have set forth was furnished her from Anti-Slavery sources, and the representative of the Anti-Slavery Society allows it to be stated in his presence that it "covers the whole area of Slavery." Whose business then is it, since these will not make it theirs?

The blood of the child wives, and their dead babies, and their mutilated bodies, cry from the ground. The agony of the *lobolo* slave, thrashed or murdered because her confinement is difficult and painful, calls to us across the dividing seas. The screams of little girls, mad with terror at the approach of their torturers, echo from the imprisoning walls. What are we going to do about it? Are we going to establish, as our contribution to the world's history in this the century of our emancipation, that none may own nor dispose of the person of a woman and that they shall go as free as men? Are we going to insist that the Slavery Convention and its signatory nations shall ban Slavery "in all its forms," without discrimination of sex or kind, custom or creed? Are we going to tell those who say "Slavery is Slavery, no matter how benevolent," that Slavery is also Slavery, no matter how hideous? The opportunity is to our hand. A great triumph or a great betrayal can be achieved.

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