POET'S DEPARTMENT.

ENGLISH LIBERTY.

We love
The king who loves the law, respects his bounds
And reigns content within them; him we serve
Freely, and with delight, who leaves us free:
But recollecting still that he is man,
We trust him not too far. King though he be,
And king in England too, he may be weak,
And vain enough to be ambitious still;
May exercise amiss his proper powers,
Or covet more than freemen choose to grant:
Beyond that mark is treason. He is ours
To administer, to guard, to adorn the state,
But not to wrap or change it. We are his
To serve him nobly in the common cause,
True to the death, but not to be his slaves.
Mark now the difference, ye that boast your love
Of kings, between your loyalty and ours!
We love the man, the paltry pageant you;
We the chief patron of the commonwealth,
You the regardless author of its woes;
We, for the sake of liberty, a king,
You chains and bondage for a tyrant's sake:
Our love is principle, and has its root
In reason—is judicious, manly, free;
Yours, a blind instinct, crouches to the rod,
And licks the foot that treads it in the dust.
Were kingship as true treasure as it seems,
Sterling, and worthy of a wise man's wish,
I would not be a king to be beloved
Causeless, and daubed with undiscerning praise,
Where love is mere attachment to the throne,
Not to the man who fills it as he ought.
'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume;
And we are weeds without it. All constraint,
Except what wisdom lays on evil men,
Is evil; hurts the faculties, impedes
Their progress in the road of science, blinds
The eyesight of discovery, and begets
In those that suffer it a sordid mind,
Bestial, a meagre intellect, unfit
To be the tenant of man's noble form.
Thee therefore still, blameworthy as thou art,
With all thy loss of empire, and though squeezed
By public exigence till annual food
Fails for the craving hunger of the state,
Thee I account still happy, and the chief
Among the nations, seeing thou art free.
My native nook of earth! thy clime is rude,
Replete with vapours, and disposes much
All hearts to sadness, and none more than mine:
Thine unadulterate manners are less soft
And plausible than social life requires;
And thou hast need of discipline and art
To give thee what politer France receives
From nature's bounty—that humane address
And sweetness, without which no pleasure is
In converse, either starved by cold reserve,
Or flushed with fierce dispute, a senseless brawl:
Yet, being free, I love thee: for the sake
Of that one feature can be well content,
Disgraced as thou hast been, poor as thou art,
To seek no sublunary rest beside.
But once enslaved, farewell! I could endure
Chains nowhere patiently; and chains at home,
Where I am free by birthright, not at all.

SCOTT.

SLAVE-TRADE OPERATIONS.

From the Sierra-Leone New Era for January.

At Sierra Leone there are Mixed Courts of Justice for the adjudication of suspected vessels bearing the flags of nations who have entered into treaties with Great Britain for the suppression of the slave-trade, and a Vice Admiralty Court for the adjudication of such vessels as are without evidence of nationality. In the Mixed Courts no case had been adjudicated upon during the year 1855, with the exception of one vessel, which was liberated. In the Vice-Admiralty Court, a prize to the "Ferret," taken in the Rio Pongus, fully equipped for the slave trade, was condemned and broken up, besides several native canoes with slaves on board, captured in their transit from the Sherbro to the Susu country. "The total number of cases prosecuted before the Mixed Commissions since their establishment at Sierra Leone in June 1819 up to the end of December 1855, is 531, whereof 503 were cases of condemnation." In the same period there have been emancipated by these Mixed Courts 64,615 slaves, of whom 56,95 have been registered at Sierra Leone. During the year 1855 no slaves were emancipated or registered. We should, however, err very much in judgment if we therefore concluded that the action of the slave trade had ceased on this portion of the coast, and that there are no slave ships engaged in bearing their human freightage across the wide Atlantic, either to die on the passage or live as slaves. The slave ships have been numerous, but they have escaped our cruisers, not from want of vigilance, but from their numerical inadequacy to the *surveillance* of so extensive a coast. The fact is undoubted, that, in consequence of the reduced strength of the British squadron, the exportation of slaves during the year 1854 was greatly increased. We fear that the slave dealers have not been less successful in the year 1855; and we think that this is capable of demonstration. Cuba is, at the present moment, the only certain market for African slaves tran-shipped across the Atlantic. From whatever points along the extended coast of West Africa the lines of slave traffic may be drawn, they all converge to Cuba as a common centre. If, then, we are enabled to show that there has been large arrivals of slaves in Cuba, there must have been corresponding transshipments from the African coast, although they escaped, a very few instances excepted, the vigilance of our cruisers. That there has been such an increase of slaves in the island of Cuba cannot be disputed. According to official statistics, the number of slaves imported into that island during the year 1854 amounted, at the lowest computation, to 7673; and if the usual addition of one third be made for unreported landings, the total estimate for that year will be 10,239: a number not indeed so large as that of 1853, but larger than the number of those imported in any one of the eleven years immediately preceding the year 1853, and exceeding the average of importations during the last fifteen years by 4034. The year 1855 appears, from the despatches of our agents, to have been of similar activity. We find, indeed, a statement from Her Majesty's Acting Commissary Judge at the Havana, dated Jan. 14, 1856, to the effect, that, during the year 1855, 4806 Bozals were got on shore at various places, of which 125 were captured, making, with an addition of one third for the unreported, a total of 6408 introduced during the preceding twelve months. We fear that the above sum must be viewed as a very low computation. We are disposed to this conclusion from the increased facilities afforded to the slave dealers. It has been no longer necessary that the expeditions to the coast of Africa should proceed, as formerly, from Cuba. The required vessels have been found in the United States, "where the craft employed are to be met with, cheap and suitable, as well as their fittings and stores much more reasonable in price than in Cuba; added to which they are subjected to less observation, and run less risk of detection; the masters and crews being easily found to proceed under the direction of an agent or supercargo—usually experienced slave dealers—their cargoes being ready waiting their appearance at the given point of embarkation; they arrive there under the American flag, take on board their miserable cargo, and are off so very quickly from the coast that they would be found, like the "Grey Eagle," without papers of any kind, should there be evidence on board of their slaving character."

'Such slaves generally, however, escape capture on the coast of Africa, and they arrive at some place on that of Cuba, where advice is waiting them as to the point of landing their cargoes. The parties here who are interested in the mean time have made their arrangements, and the slaves are introduced safely and with impunity."*

On reading these extracts we cannot discern any grounds for concluding that the slave importations for 1855 have been less than those of the preceding year; but, on the contrary, much to sustain the probability of their having considerably increased. In fact, when we take into consideration the systematic organization which now prevails, the swift sailing and well found vessels employed, the experience of the crews, the connivance of the Spanish subordinates, the eagerness of Cuba for an increase of the labour element, and the extent of Cuban coast, affording, as it does, various points of landing from whence a selection may be made, it is impossible even to conjecture the actual amount of importation; nor is it at all beyond the range of probability that it may have doubled that of the preceding year. The Spanish authorities find it possible to adopt such measures as are effective to prevent the landing of slaves. "*All the slaves that are brought to the coast of Cuba continue to be landed.*" Such is the testimony of Mr. Consul General Crawford, under date October 3. 1855; and therefore, with facilities of obtaining negroes on the African coast through the weakness of our squadron, and of landing them on the Cuban coast, without hindrance or even difficulty, and with American vessels at their disposal to act as carriers, we may be assured that the slave dealers have not failed to prosecute their infamous vocation throughout the year 1855 with all activity. In fact so flagrant have these proceedings been, that they have been made the subject of special remonstrance to the Spanish Government through our Ambassador at the Court of Madrid, Lord Clarendon, in a despatch dated December 21 1855 citing the following facts as demonstrative of the unchecked importation of slaves into Cuba "namely, that the number of slaves employed upon the estates of Cuba have been kept up; that many new sugar plantations have been formed, and supplied with African labourers; and that, upon the whole, the boasted activity and vigilance of General Concha have failed remarkably in producing any beneficial effect towards the suppression of the slave trade."

The masses thus imported into Cuba have been deported from Africa, and the slave trade, at various points along the coast of that continent, must have been intensely active. True the slave vessels captured during the year 1855 have been few indeed. During the previous year—1854 there were captured and condemned no fewer than seven vessels engaged in the slave trade, six of them with slaves on board; but during the year 1855, besides the native canoes already mentioned, there have been captured one brig in the Rio Pongas, and a small cutter rigged vessels without name, flag, or papers, with a crew of five persons, and having ninety slaves on board, from the Congo bound to St. Thomas, destroyed by H. M. S. "Plumper" as unfit for a sea voyage. But that slave ships have been numerous on the coast may be collected from the despatches of our agents. When Commodore Adams was cruising off the Bissagos or Bejuga islands, in the early part of 1855, it was reported to him that two Portuguese vessels had succeeded in escaping with cargoes of slaves.

The Rio Pongas keeps up its reputation for the slave trade, and despatches from Sierra Leone bearing date January 12, 1855, state, that at that time a cargo of Africans was collected there ready for shipment, and only waiting for a vessel to convey them away. One of Her Majesty's cruisers was constantly stationed at that point of the coast, and of the nine vessels captured in 1854 and 1855, two had been in the Rio Pongas. No doubt an equally effective *surveillance* at other suspected points would have been followed by similar results. Towards the end of 1855, an American schooner, the "Alexander Mitchell," after calling at Monrovia with a cargo of American produce, is said to have shipped and carried off upwards of 309 negroes from between Cape Palmas and the Bights. Another schooner, from Havana, flying Spanish colours, Don Domingo Mustich, a well known slave dealer, master, had been seen in September 1855, off Sinou, a port of entry in the republic of Liberia, the master coming on shore and making inquiries after slaves. In the following November, a brigantine of suspicious appearance, her copper being painted white, her bulwarks black with a red streak, and having a greater number of hands than is usual, was seen of the Liberian coast. If we look into the Bights similar traces are apparent. On January 2d of the present year, Her Majesty's steamship "Hecate," being off Appii Vista, in the Bight of Benin, chased a suspicious vessel, which, not being able to escape, was run on shore, and totally destroyed. She was found fully equipped to receive slaves. A board had been nailed over that part of the stern on which the name is usually placed. On this being withdrawn, the vessel's name was apparent—the "Chatsworth," of New York Consul Campbell—Lagos—under date of February 1, 1856, reports the arrival of Don Domingo Mustich at Whydah, and the active renewal of the slave trade at that and the neighbouring ports, and of the three vessels forming his expedition having got away with a cargo of slaves. Two other vessels under the American flag were at that time hovering about the slave ports, preparing to take away slaves should the opportunity occur. Several slaves had effected their escape from the barracoons of various slave dealers, but on their flight to Lagos were unhappily intercepted by the natives and retained as slaves, or sold. Only twelve of the number having succeeded in reaching Lagos, were liberated by King Docomo, on the interposition of the consul: they were earning an honest livelihood. We regret to say that slaves are not wanting to furnish cargoes for the slave ships. During the course of 1855 the people of Ibadan invaded a country called Efon, near the Niger; and, after meeting with considerable resistance, succeeded in sweeping off the whole population of the district, to the number, it is said, of 10,000. They returned to Ibadan in September last, bringing with them a number of these unfortunate captives. Finding no purchaser for them in the Ijebu markets, the port of Lagos being now closed to all slave trading operations, they forwarded them to Whydah. One of our Missionaries, the Rev. J. A. Maser, journeying from Abbeokuta to Ibadan in April last, met some of these poor sufferers, slave boys of about the age of fourteen years, belonging to the Efon tribe, who were being driven down to the coast for sale. It is to be feared that in Mustich and his compeers they found ready purchasers, and that, like Dasalu, they have been shipped on board of the many slave ships which have been lurking about on that part of the coast.

We learn from Her Majesty's Consul at Fernando Po, that to the southward of Corisco the Portuguese and Spaniards are prosecuting the trade in canoes and boats, the slaves being thus transferred, by small instalments, to Prince's and St. Thomas's islands, from which many of them are said to be transported to the Havana.

On the Portuguese portion of the coast, looking further south, an American schooner carried off, in the end of March 1855 from a spot called Quicongo, in the neighbourhood of Black Point, 350 slaves, destined for Cuba. Such are the hopes entertained of an active revival of the slave trade on that part of the coast, that a notorious slave dealer, Francisco Jose de Rosa, had clandestinely left Rio de Janeiro for Loanda, by way of Mossamedas and Benguela. The Brazilian Government, convinced, from the known character of the man, that he had slave trading transactions in view, communicated this information to the British authorities, through our Ambassador at Lisbon.

We may not terminate, this review of slave trading operations on the coast of Africa without reference to certain proceedings in the Sherbro river. The Susu and Mandingo slave-dealers prosecute an active trade in the Sherbro and the adjacent districts, resorting thither in very considerable numbers, and establishing such a system of terrorism, that British subjects, trading in the same neighbourhoods, are afraid to have any communication with the British Consul, lest they should be suspected of giving him information as to what was going forward. Thus, in these waters, there is carried on a very active canoe-transport traffic, slaves continued to be transported almost daily from the Kittam, Gallinas, and Boom countries, to places north of the Sierra Leone colony. As might be expected, slave ships hover on this part of the coast, and, no doubt, occasionally succeed in shipping cargoes; but the greatest portion of the slaves are transported by canoes to the northward, where they can be shipped in more security. This traffic appears to be so much on the increase, that "whereas formerly the canoes engaged in it usually commenced to come into the southern waters about the end of March and the beginning of April, after the previous year's cargoes had been conveyed away, now, very considerable numbers are reported to be coming in before the old companies have left."* It would be a great misapprehension of the character of this trade to suppose that it is merely for domestic purposes. It is "as really and certainly for purposes of traffic and gain as the transoceanic trade, and in its results, equally calculated to chattelize man and to infringe every right of humanity."* We are glad to find that several of these canoes have been captured within the British waters—two canoes in December last, about two miles from the Banana islands, with eighty-six slaves on board; and three others on the 14th of January of the present year, in Sierra Leone river, about twenty miles from Freetown. No fewer than 119 persons, men, women, boys, and girls, were found packed together in the bottom of the canoes, as is always the case, in a very confined space, and enduring the torture of a constrained and painful position.

* * * * * * *

It is evident that a very active trade is being prosecuted by the Snaheli and Arab subjects of the Imam of Muscat; that the Turkish branch on the north coast is in more than usual activity; and that the same may be affirmed of West African exportation. We are quite aware that the statements of the naval officers in command on the West-African coast are of an opposite character. Commodore Adams, under date of September 26th, 1855, reports that "what little traffic in slaves still continues to exist on this coast is chiefly carried on in American bottoms." We fear that the American go-betweens find opportunity for much more than a "little traffic;" but the insufficiency of the blockading force accounts for the discrepency. All the squadrons for the suppression of the slave-trade were diminished on the commencement of the Russian war: the French one dwindled down to a very small number, and our own was greatly reduced. We are informed that they have been reinforced: we should be glad to know whether it be sufficiently so for the exigencies of Africa.

Is the blockading system to be abandoned or otherwise? Some, who unite with us in abhorrence of the slave-trade, pronounce very confidently on the utter uselessness of such a mode of proceeding. The Anti-Slavery Report concludes this to be the case, from the feeblenes of the results which have been produced, the number of vessels captured averaging not more than twenty a year. Now, before we pronounce on the abortiveness of the system, it would be prudent, in the first instance, to decide as to what we are justified in expecting from it. What was it intended to do? Let that point be first decided. It is not just to condemn an instrumentality because it has not answered extravagant expectations. We never dreamed that the squadron would be extirpative in its results, but we believed that, if duly sustained, it would so far repress the intensity of slave trade proceedings, as to afford opportunity for the really curative agencies to come into action. What are these? Some would reply, Legitimate commerce.

* Her Majesty's Acting Commissary Judge at Havana to the Earl of Clarendon Jan. 14, 1856.

** Mr, Consul Hanson to the Earl of Clarendon Oct, 1, 1855.

To be continued