



8156aa 28

3470

THE NARRATIVE

OF

AMOS DRESSER,

WITH

STONE'S LETTERS FROM NATCHEZ,—AN  
OBITUARY NOTICE OF THE WRITER,

AND

TWO LETTERS FROM TALLAHASSEE, RELATING  
TO THE TREATMENT OF SLAVES.

---

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY,  
144 NASSAU-STREET.

1836



**THE NARRATIVE**  
OF  
**AMOS DRESSER.**

---

*From the Cincinnati Gazette.*

**AMOS DRESSER'S CASE.**

My editorial notice of Amos Dresser's case is not well received by the Nashville Banner. In this I am not disappointed. But it is not my purpose now to discuss, with that paper, the points of difference between us, except in one or two particulars.

The Banner says, "DRESSER HAD NOT LAID HIMSELF LIABLE TO ANY PUNISHMENT KNOWN TO OUR LAWS, the defect of which, in that respect, we trust will be remedied at the approaching session of our General Assembly." This assumption to punish a man that has violated no law, by the creation of the law and the tribunal to try the accused in the midst of furious excitement, is new in our country. And it is most dangerous. *The law is defective, and exasperated pre-judgment assumes to supply the defect!* This is precisely the argument upon which the recent mob in Baltimore proceeded: the exact doctrine that originated the monstrous enormities of the French revolution.

The Banner alleges the respectability of the Committee of Vigilance as a safeguard for the accused. In my view this very respectability is the circumstance in the transaction most to be deprecated. When *respectable men* engage in the perpetration of illegal violence, for what they deem a correct purpose, the example is set for *all men* to pursue the same course. And it is an example too certainly and generally followed. Does not the temper of the times now evince the truth of this suggestion? The names of the Committee of Vigilance are given in the Banner, and are subjoined.

**COMMITTEE OF VIGILANCE AND SAFETY.**

JOHN SHELBY, Chairman.

|                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| John Nichol,*   | Thomas Crincher,   |
| John Vaultx,    | John P. Erwin,     |
| James P. Clark, | H. L. Douglass,    |
| H. R. W. Hill,  | Thomas Claiborne,† |
| Robert Woods,   | Allen A. Hall,     |

\* Elder in the Presbyterian church.

† Campbellite minister, Claiborne.—Notes by Mr. Dresser.

Thomas H. Fletcher,  
 James Irwin,  
 Alpha Kingsley,\*  
 A. A. Caseday,\*  
 Mason Vannoy,  
 John Austin,  
 James A. Porter,  
 John M. Hill,  
 Thomas Wells,  
 Edward D. Hicks,  
 George Wilson,  
 Wm. Armstrong,\*  
 W. Hasell Hunt,  
 Thomas Callender,  
 James Woods,  
 George Brown,  
 Greenwood Payne,  
 John Estell,  
 Thomas J. Read,  
 Joel M. Smith,  
 Joseph Miller,  
 Nicholas Hobson,  
 Samuel M. Barner,  
 Washington Barrow,  
 Joseph Smith,  
 George Crockett,

Robert Farquharson,  
 John Somerville,  
 Samuel Seay\*  
 Samuel Watkins,  
 Beverly W. White,  
 Robert W. Greene,  
 Robert I. Moore,  
 John M. Bass,  
 James Young,  
 Andrew Hynes,  
 James Nichol,  
 Floyd Hunt,  
 Anthony W. Johnson,  
 Edward Trabue,  
 J. B. Knowles,  
 S. V. D. Stout,\*  
 S. C. Robinson,\*  
 George S. Yerger,  
 Wm. M. Berryhill,  
 Theo. P. Minor,  
 Elishu S. Hall,  
 Foster G. Crutcher,  
 F. P. Wook,  
 H. R. Cartmell, and  
 W. H. Moore.

I am requested "after having examined this list, candidly to say, whether four or five hours spent by such men in the trial, and nearly as many more in subsequent deliberation, is not evidence of their calmness, patience, and of a wish to act with impartiality." My reply is, that men who proceed to try and inflict infamous punishment upon an individual who has *violated no law*, as the Banner asserts, or in respect to whose case their own Attorney-General says, it "was a case not adequately provided for by law, and until the legislature shall make proper provisions against the incendiary publications of abolitionists, it will be very dangerous for them to meddle in an improper way in so delicate and dangerous a concern, and the public feeling cannot be restrained in that respect," must necessarily be excited beyond the exercise of a sound judgment. It is impossible that sensible and respectable men, not thus excited, could engage in such a business. However satisfied with themselves, and their own conduct at this time, it is incontrovertible, that their measures are indefensible in any just view of sound morals, public safety, or legal obligation. Precisely as they sustain themselves upon their special case, may every special case be sustained in the opinion of the actors. Gamblers may be hung, banks demolished, bank agents plundered, churches torn down. This is no idle speculation. We have but to look at daily events, for the practical illustration. Of this enough.

\* Elders in the Presbyterian church.

Mr. Hunt supposes his name was invidiously introduced into the Gazette's notice of Dresser's case. Nothing of disrespect or of ridicule was intended by the repetition of his name. Having appeared in the Banner, it was used in the Gazette as convenient for perspicuity in illustration.

In this day's Gazette we publish Amos Dresser's own account of his journey to Nashville, and of his doings and treatment at that place. Upon inquiry we find that Dresser is a native of Massachusetts, that he lost his father in his infancy, and that he remained with his mother and her second husband laboring on a farm, until about fifteen years of age. He then set out to get a living and an education for himself. He was for a time engaged in a store; he then taught a school; afterwards became a student in the Oneida Labor Institute, in New-York, from whence he came to Lane Seminary. That he abandoned, upon its prohibition of the Abolition Society. His object is to obtain orders as a minister of the gospel, and thus qualify himself for a foreign mission. For the rest, let his own story speak.

---

### AMOS DRESSER'S OWN NARRATIVE.

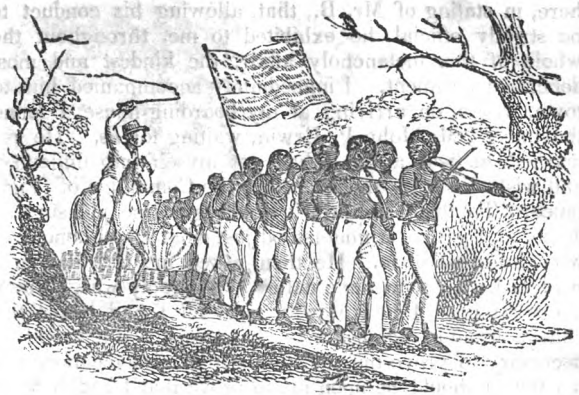
As my name has obtained an unexpected notoriety, I ask the public attention to my own account of the transactions that have given me celebrity.

On the first day of last month I left Cincinnati for the purpose of selling the "Cottage Bible," in order, from the profits of the sale, to raise funds sufficient to enable me to complete my education. The largest portion of my books was sent to Nashville by water. I took several copies of the Bible with me, besides a considerable number of the little work entitled "Six Months in a Convent." In packing them into my trunk and the box of my barouche, a number of pamphlets and papers of different descriptions were used to prevent the books from injury by rubbing, intending to distribute them as suitable opportunities should present. Among them were old religious newspapers, anti-slavery publications, numbers of the Missionary Herald, Sunday-school periodicals, temperance almanacs, &c., &c. At Danville, Ky., where a state anti-slavery society had been organized some months before, and where the subject of emancipation seemed to be discussed without restraint, besides selling several copies of my books, I parted with a large share of my anti-slavery publications.

In travelling through that state, I distributed most of my temperance almanacs and other papers above mentioned, including a few tracts on slavery, given to those who were willing to receive them. *I gave none of these to any person of color, bond or free, nor had I any intention of doing so.*

Near Gallatin, in Sumner county, Tennessee, I sold a copy of Rankin's Letters on Slavery. I arrived at Nashville on Saturday the 11th of July, and took lodgings at the Nashville Inn. The young man who accompanied me, in bringing into the house my books from the box of the barouche, omitted the anti-slavery tracts and other pamphlets. Their being overlooked did not occupy the attention of either of us, and on Monday morning the barouche was taken to the shop of Mr. Stout to be repaired. In the course of the day Mr. S. remarked to his workmen, as he afterwards informed me, that perhaps, as I came from Cincinnati, I was an Abolitionist. On this, one of them commenced rummaging my carriage. In the box he found, among the other pamphlets, a February number of the Anti-Slavery Record, with a cut representing a drove of slaves chained, the two foremost having violins, on which they were playing—the American flag waving in the centre, whilst the slave-driver, with his whip, was urging on the rear. This added considerably to the general excitement, which I afterwards learned, was prevailing in relation to slavery—and in a short time it was noised about that I had been “circulating incendiary periodicals among the free colored people, and trying to excite the slaves to insurrection.” So soon as the report came to my knowledge, I went to Mr. Stout, and explained to him how it was that the pamphlets had been left in the barouche. I then took into my custody the remainder of them, and locked them up in my trunk. Mr. S. on this occasion, told me that the scene represented in the cut was one of by no means unfrequent occurrence—that it was accurate in all its parts, and that he had witnessed it again and again. Mr. S. is himself a slaveholder, though, as he says, opposed to slavery in principle—a *member*, if not an *elder*, in the Presbyterian





church, and one of the committee of vigilance which afterwards sat in judgment upon me.

The excitement continued to increase, and it was soon added to the report, that I had been posting up handbills about the city, inviting an insurrection of the slaves. Knowing all the charges to be false—feeling unconscious of any evil intention, and therefore fearless of danger, I continued the sale of my Bibles in and around the city, till Saturday, the 18th day of the month, when, as I was preparing to leave town to attend a camp-meeting, held some eight or ten miles distant, a Mr. Estell, formerly an auctioneer and vender of slaves, at public outcry, in Alabama, met me at the door and demanded “*those abolition documents*” I had in my possession. I replied, he should have them, and proceeded to get them for him. When he made the demand he was under the influence of very highly excited feelings—his whole frame indicating agitation, even to trembling. On presenting the pamphlets, I requested him to read before he condemned them. This seemed greatly to inflame his rage.

I then proceeded to the camp-ground, where, about two hours after my arrival, I was taken in charge by Mr. Braughton, the principal city officer. I take pleasure

here, in stating of Mr. B., that, allowing his conduct to be strictly official, he exhibited to me, throughout the whole of this melancholy affair, the kindest and most delicate deportment. I immediately accompanied him to town, where, on arriving at my boarding-house, I found the mayor, Mr. John P. Erwin, waiting for us. He remarked, he was afraid I had got myself into difficulty, and wished me to appear before the Committee of Vigilance. To this I replied, it would give me pleasure to do so, as I wished it understood just what I had done, and what I *had not* done. He then asked me if I had any witness I wished to have called. My reply was, I knew not what need I had of witnesses, till I had heard the charge brought against me—that I supposed it would be necessary to prove me guilty of some misdemeanor, and not that it should be upon me to prove that I had broken no law. To his demand, if I was ready for trial, I answered, I wished it to take place immediately, as I was anxious to return to the camp-ground.

We repaired to the court-room, which was at once crowded full to overflowing. The roll of the Committee (sixty in number) was called, and the names of the absentees proclaimed.

The meeting being called to order, the mayor stated, that he had caused me to be arrested, and brought before the Committee, in consequence of the excitement produced by the periodicals known to have been in my possession; and that he had also taken into his charge my trunk, which he had delayed opening till my return. The trunk was then produced before the Committee, and a motion made and carried, that I should be interrogated as to its contents before opening it. On being interrogated accordingly, I replied, as the trunk was before them, I preferred they should make the examination for themselves. It was then resolved, (the whole house voting) that my trunk should be examined. The officer first laid before the Committee a pile of clothing, which was examined very closely—then followed my books, among which was found, one copy of the "Oasis," one of "Rankin's Letters on Slavery," and one of "Bourne's Picture of Slavery in

the United States." These, I informed the Committee, I had put in my trunk for my own perusal, as I wished to compare what had been written with the result of my own observation while in the slave states, and that no individual had seen them besides myself. A careful inspection was made of the books also. Then was presented my business and private letters, which were read with eagerness and much interest. Extracts were read aloud.

Among them was one from a letter received from a very aged and venerable lady, running thus—"Preached a stream of abolition two hundred and fifty miles long," in travelling from Cincinnati to Cleveland. Great importance was attached to this. Another spoke of the "inconsistency of celebrating the Fourth of July, while so many among us were literally in bondage." Another, from a letter of Mr. Ensign, (a gentleman well known to entertain no very favorable sentiments for Abolitionism) which, after urging me to diligence in the sale of my Bibles, (obtained from him) jestingly concluded, "Now don't spend more than half your time among the niggers." This was cheered by the crowd. The last was from the letter of a friend of mine, a minister of the gospel, who remarked that on visiting his friends at the east, abolition had been the principal topic of conversation that day, and he had preached on slavery at night!

Great stress was laid on these extracts, and I was questioned very minutely, as to the authors of the letters. They labored much to prove I was sent out by some society, and that I was, under the guise of a religious mission, performing the odious office of an insurrectionary agent.

My journal was next brought in review, but as it had been kept in pencil mark, the memoranda short and hastily written, it served them very little purpose. It was laid down again by the Mayor, who had attempted to read it aloud, with this remark—"It is evidently very hostile to slavery."

A witness was now called forward by whom it was proved, that an anti-slavery periodical of some kind had been left by some individual on the counter of the Nash-

ville Inn. That it was left with a copy of the Cottage Bible, at the time I arrived. On being questioned by me, it turned out to be a number of the Emancipator, used as an envelope, or wrapper to the Bible; other witnesses were called, but this was the substance of all they proved against me.

It was conceded without hesitation on my part, that I had sold a copy of "Rankin's Letters," in Sumner county, and that I had read to Mr. Cayce, at his request, the number of the "Anti-Slavery Record" before mentioned, which he said contained nothing that any candid man, and especially any Christian, could gainsay. The chairman of the committee asked me if I remembered the *places* where I had circulated anti-slavery tracts. Thus, by the form of the question, as well as by the manner, making the impression I *had* circulated them *somewhere*, and that the fact of my having done so was known to the committee. To this I replied that what I did, I did openly—that I had not distributed any anti-slavery publications whatever in Tennessee, except the one above mentioned, and that, if any had been found under circumstances calculated to throw suspicion on me, it was a device of my enemies. On being interrogated as to my former connection with Lane Seminary, I informed the committee that I had been a member of that institution as well as of the Anti-Slavery Society, formed there more than a year ago; and that I had voluntarily withdrawn, and had received an honorable dismissal from the same.

A handbill was next produced, and I was asked if I had ever seen it. After having examined it, I replied I never had. I was then asked with strong emphasis, if I was *sure* I had never seen a copy of it. I again replied I was sure I never had. I was asked a third time, with a provoking and still stronger emphasis, if I was *positively sure* I had never seen any thing of the kind. I again took it into my hand, and after examining it more minutely, *again* replied I was *positively sure* I had never seen any thing of the kind. The trial continued from between four and five o'clock, P. M. till eleven o'clock at night, when I was called upon for my defence. The perplexity I must have

felt in making it may well be imagined, when it is recollected that I was charged not with transgressing any law of the state or ordinance of the city, but with conduct to which, if the law had attached the penalty of crime, its forms were totally disregarded, and this too, before an array of persons banded together in contravention of law, and from whose mandate of execution there was no appeal. However, I took the opportunity thus offered to declare fully my sentiments on the subject of slavery. Whilst I told them I believed slaveholding to be inconsistent with the gospel, and a constant transgression of God's law, I yet said, that in bringing about emancipation, the interests of the master were to be consulted as well as those of the slave. And that the whole scheme of emancipation contemplated this result, that the slave should be put in possession of rights which we have declared to be inalienable from him as a man; that he should be considered as an immortal fellow-being, intrusted by his master with the custody of his own happiness, and accountable to him for the exercise of his powers; that he should be treated as our *neighbor and our brother*. In reference to my demeanor towards the slave, that in the few instances in which I had casually conversed with them, I had recommended quietness, patience, submission; teaching them to "render good for evil," and discountenancing every scheme of emancipation which did not, during its process, look for its success in the good conduct of the slaves whilst they remain such, and to the influence of argument and persuasion addressed to the understandings and consciences of slaveholders, exhorting them to obey God in doing justice and showing mercy to their fellow-men.

After my remarks were ended, the crowd were requested to withdraw whilst the committee deliberated on the case. In company with a friend or two I was directed to a private room near at hand, to await their decision. Up to this period, during the whole proceedings, my mind was composed, my spirits calm and unruffled; nor did I entertain the most distant apprehension there would be so flagrant a violation of my rights as an American citizen, and so deliberate an attempt to dishonor me as a man,

In this confidence I was strengthened by the consideration of all the circumstances of the case. What I had done, I had done openly. *There was no law forbidding what I had done.* I had contracted no guilt that the law considered such—my intentions had been those of kindness to all—I had no secret feelings of guilt, arraigning me before the bar of my conscience, for any mean or clandestine movement. In addition to this, too, among my triers, there was a great portion of the respectability of Nashville. Nearly half of the whole number, professors of Christianity, the reputed stay of the church, supporters of the cause of benevolence in the form of Tracts and Missionary Societies and Sabbath-schools, several members, and most of the elders of the Presbyterian church, from whose hands, but a few days before, I had received the emblems of the broken body and shed blood of our blessed Saviour. My expectations, however, were soon shaken by Mr. Braughton's saying on entering the room where I was, that he feared it would go hard with me—that, whilst some of the committee were in favor of thirty-nine, others were for inflicting one hundred lashes, whilst others still thought me worthy of death. My suspense was at length terminated on being summoned to hear the decision; it was prefaced by a few remarks of this kind by the chairman, "that they had acted with great caution and deliberation, and however unsatisfactory their conclusion might be to me, they had acted conscientiously, with a full recognition of their duty to their God"—that they had found me guilty, 1st, "of being a member of an Anti-Slavery Society in Ohio;" 2d, "of having in my possession periodicals published by the American Anti-Slavery Society:" and 3d, "they BELIEVED I had circulated these periodicals and advocated in the community the principles they inculcated." He then pronounced that I was condemned to receive twenty lashes on my bare back, and ordered to leave the place in twenty-four hours. [This was not an hour previous to the commencement of the Sabbath.]

The doors were then thrown open, and the crowd admitted. To them it was again remarked, that "the com-

mittee had been actuated by conscientious motives ; and to those who thought the punishment *too severe*, they would only say, that they had done what they, after *mature deliberation*, thought to be right ; and to those who thought it *too light*, they must say, that in coming to their decision the committee had regarded not so much the number of stripes, as the disgrace and infamy of being publicly whipped." The sentence being again repeated, it was received with great applause, accompanied by stamping of feet and clapping of hands.

The chairman then called for the sentiments of the spectators in reference to their approbation of the decision of the committee, desiring all who were satisfied with it, and would pledge themselves that I should receive no injury after the execution of the sentence, to signify it in the usual way. There was no dissenting voice.

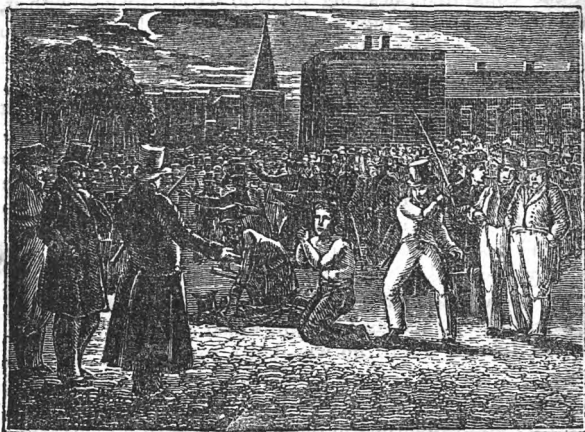
The chairman then expressed, in terms bordering on the extravagant, his high gratification of the sense of propriety that had been manifested in the conduct of the meeting, and that so much confidence was placed in the committee. The crowd was now ordered to proceed to the public square, and form a ring.

I had been assured that my trunk with all its contents, as they were taken out, should be returned to me. But whilst the crowd were leaving the house, Mr. Hunt, editor of the Banner, and as I am informed an emigrant from New-England, where he was born, set himself busily to work to secure in his own hands, my journal, sketch-book, business and private letters, &c.

By no one concerned in the whole proceeding was there so much exasperated feeling shown, as by Mr. H. It was now displayed in the pale death-like countenance, the agitated frame, the hurried furious air with which he seized the papers and tied them up in his handkerchief, clinching them in his hands, and at the same time eyeing me with an intense, yet vacant gaze, bespeaking not only rage, but a consciousness of doing wrong. Of my papers I have heard nothing since Mr. H. took them into his custody.

I entered the ring that had been formed ; the chairman

(accompanied by the committee) again called for an expression of sentiment in relation to the sentence passed upon me; again the vote was unanimous in approbation of it, and again did he express his gratification at the good order by which the whole proceeding had been characterized. Whilst some of the company were engaged in stripping me of my garments, a motion was made and seconded that I be exonerated altogether from the punishment. This brought many and furious imprecations on the mover's head, and created a commotion which was appeased only by the sound of the instrument of torture and disgrace upon my naked body.



I knelt to receive the punishment, which was inflicted by Mr. Braughton, the city officer, with a heavy cowskin. When the infliction ceased, an involuntary feeling of thanksgiving to God for the fortitude with which I had been enabled to endure it arose in my soul, to which I began aloud to give utterance. The death-like silence that prevailed for a moment, was suddenly broken with loud exclamations, "G—d d——n him, stop his praying." I was raised to my feet by Mr. Braughton, and conducted



by him to my lodging, where it was thought safe for me to remain but for a few moments.

And though most of my *friends* were at the campground, I was introduced into a family of entire strangers, from whom I received a warm reception, and the most kind and tender treatment. They will ever be remembered with grateful emotions.

On the ensuing morning, owing to the great excitement that was still prevailing, I found it necessary to leave the place in disguise, with only what clothing I had about my person; leaving unsold property to the amount of nearly three hundred dollars, and sacrificing at least two hundred on my barouche, horse, &c., which I was obliged to sell. Of my effects at Nashville, I have heard nothing since my return, though I have frequently written to my friends concerning them.

AMOS DRESSER.

*Cincinnati, August 25, 1835.*

---

THE GENERAL TREATMENT OF SLAVES AT THE  
SOUTH-WEST.

*Two Letters to the Editor of the N. Y. Evangelist.*

No. I.

The opportunity for observing facts, enjoyed by the writer of the following letters, is not more apparent than the candor and caution with which he writes. His statement will carry conviction to all thinking minds which become acquainted with it. It accords with what we know of human nature, when placed in similar circumstances. And furthermore it is called forth at the hazard of the personal interests, perhaps the safety of the writer. We request and hope for it a careful perusal.

NATCHEZ, May 24, 1835.

BROTHER LEAVITT,—Is it possible! I have just been reading an article in No. II, of the Anti-Slavery Record,

entitled Compensation, in which it is said, as an allegation of the writer's opponents, "But we are told that this is very seldom the case at the South," (that is, that the holder over-drives and under-feeds his slaves)—"the slaves are very happy—better off than northern free laborers." Again I exclaim, Is it possible! I had supposed that after all the testimonies that had been given, and the facts piled upon facts that had been presented to the public—circulated through newspapers, and promulgated in public addresses, this subject was set at rest—that no one had any longer the least doubt upon the subject. And certainly I was not a little surprised to find it a sentiment still rife at the North, that the slaves at the South "are seldom over-worked and under-fed—that they are very happy—better off than northern free laborers." It is possible that my surprise might have arisen in part, or chiefly, from my living among them and having daily palpable evidence entirely to the contrary, without reflecting that the same amount of evidence was not before every eye at the North. No one here thinks that the slaves are seldom over-driven and under-fed. Every body knows it to be one of the most common occurrences. The planters do not deny it, except perhaps to northerners, whom they take to be uninformed on the subject—or when on some particular occasion they wish to carry a point. True, they try to make the thing appear as fair as possible, and are in the habit of holding it up to themselves and others in its most favorable light. But then no planter of intelligence and candor denies that slaves are very generally badly treated in this country. I wish to be understood now at the commencement, that intending as I do that my statements shall be relied on, and knowing that, should you think fit to publish this communication, they will come to this country, where their correctness may be tested by comparison with real life, I make them with the utmost care and precaution. But those which I do make are made without the least apprehension of their being controverted. It occurs to me that perhaps one reason why the public mind at the North is no more satisfied on this subject is, that the facts and statements re-

specting slavery at the South have not been of a sufficiently general application. Particular instances of hard driving, ill feeding, severe flogging, and other cruelties, have been given without making any statements from which a definite conception of the extent and frequency of such treatment could be formed. I hope to avoid this, and to give such facts and sketches as will enable you to form a correct, and as far as may be, an accurate idea of slavery as it really exists in the South-west.

It is seen here undoubtedly in its worst form in the United States, and I shall not vouch for the correctness of my statements when applied to any other section than this—say the four States of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Portions of the northern parts of the two former States might also be excepted.

In the first place, with respect to labor. The *time* of labor is first to be noticed. It is a general rule on all regular plantations that the slaves rise in season in the morning to be in the field as soon as it is light enough for them to see to work, and remain there until it is so dark that they cannot see. This is the case at all seasons of the year; so that during the summer they are in the field at least fifteen hours. This does not include the time spent in going and returning; that must be done while it is too dark to suffer them to work, even if the field, as is frequently the case, is a mile distant. It is literally true, what one of them remarked to me the other day, that "they never knew what it is to sleep till daylight." They always eat their breakfast and dinner in the field, for each of which they are allowed from twenty minutes to half an hour. In the heat of summer and when the work is not pressing, they are sometimes allowed a longer time at dinner. Their suppers they have to prepare and eat after they return home, which, at this season of the year, takes them until nine o'clock: so that, without leaving a moment of time for any other purpose, they can have but seven hours sleep before four in the morning, when they are called. This is certainly quite little enough for a man that labors hard fifteen hours daily. In the winter, as the days are shorter, their period of daily labor

is not quite so long. They usually have no respite on Saturday. Some planters give them most of Saturday afternoon to work in their patches, where they have any, and to wash their clothes and do such other work as is always necessary to the existence of man. But these are exceptions. On most plantations they are compelled to wash their clothes and work their patches on the Sabbath, or to rob nature of those hours which she clamorously demands for repose. I need hardly say that it is usually done on the Sabbath; although there are some noble exceptions, where pious men choose rather to rob themselves of necessary sleep than God of his holy day. With regard to work on the Sabbath, it is not generally required, except perhaps some little odd jobs which might break in upon the labors of the field; such, for example, as the erection or moving of buildings, making hoe handles, grinding hoes, axes, &c., &c. All such things must be done on the Sabbath, or after the labor of the day is finished. In this state, the law has interposed and forbidden the compulsion of the ordinary labor on the Sabbath. It is not an uncommon thing, however, in crowding seasons, to procure the performance of the ordinary labor on that day, either by compulsion or otherwise. Among the French in Louisiana, Sabbath labor is very common, though not as much so now as formerly. In order that what is said respecting the severity of labor may be fully understood, it may be necessary, for the sake of those who are not acquainted with plantation arrangements in the extreme South-west, to make some explanatory remarks on this subject. The plantations in the four states of which I am speaking are, with few exceptions, either cotton or sugar plantations; and there is no sugar of account made north of latitude thirty degrees. On each cotton or sugar plantation it is common to raise corn enough in part to supply the wants of the plantation. Indeed, the common notion of a perfect plantation is, that there should be corn enough raised on it to supply itself entirely; but this is seldom done.

A respectable plantation will have about five hundred acres in cotton and about a hundred and fifty in corn.

On this there will be about fifty or sixty field hands, besides house-servants, worn out and crippled adults and children; these will make up the whole number to about one hundred; though this varies exceedingly, the number of old men and children depending very much upon the treatment they receive. The number of children on a plantation is a very good criterion by which to judge of the usage the slaves receive. Where you find few children you may expect to find many horrors. In a gang of fifty or sixty hands there will be a leader of the ploughers, a leader of the hoers, and a driver. The business of the leaders is to go forward, direct the work, and set an example of industry; of course they are chosen from the most active and trustworthy of the gang. In the leader of the hoers the principal qualification is speed. The business of the driver is to walk about, crack his whip, and cry "work, boys,"—"work, gals,"—"draw your hoes, draw your hoes;" and if his own disposition or that of the overseer requires it, occasionally to give one a switching or a regular whipping, as the case may be. A switching, is when a man is called up and receives fifteen or twenty lashes, standing, with his clothes on: a regular whipping, is when a man is put down and receives from thirty to two hundred on his bare back. The severity of the labor depends very much upon the season of the year and the nature of the work. The worst parts of the year are from the first of May to the first of July, during hoeing, and from the middle of September to the middle of December, during picking. I can give you no idea of the severity of the labor by stating the quantity of ground hoed, or the amount of cotton picked in a day. The only method I can think of is to describe the measures that are adopted to make them work. I will do this by stating facts, all of which I have derived from personal observation, or from the mouths of owners and overseers. A few days ago I was talking with an overseer of a plantation, the owner of which has universally the reputation of being a good master and treating his slaves unusually well in every respect. The slaves themselves testify to this, and they say that the overseer is not so hard as most of them are. This

overseer, speaking of the work on the place, said, it was a little behind, but he was pushing the hands up to it. Says he—"I crowded them up to-day till some of the women fairly cried." And then added, "it is pretty severe." Meaning not that it was severe compared with the general usage, but in itself considered—for he always represents himself as not being as severe as most overseers. This same man, and many other overseers and owners, have told me that throughout the country, on plantations having fifty hands, the number of floggings during the press of hoeing and cotton picking average one or two a day, and frequently fifteen or twenty are flogged at once, particularly in the time of cotton picking. My observations and inquiries on this subject have been such, that I feel no hesitation in saying that as a general thing there is at least the above number of floggings daily on plantations of that size, and this barely on the score of work. I ask, then, does this look like not being "over-driven." But to go more into particulars:—Mr. ———, a planter who resides about fourteen miles above Natchez, says, "They generally treat their slaves very well in his neighborhood." Hear how: "On a plantation of fifty hands it is common in cotton picking time to have a negro whipped every night, and frequently two or three, for not doing the required amount of work. I have myself whipped fourteen or fifteen of a night, or, rather, had my driver do it. They always lie down and receive it on their bare back and buttock. If they are uneasy they are sometimes tied; the hands and feet being stretched out and tied each to a stake driven for the purpose. But they are usually held by other negroes. In a bad case, one takes hold of each hand and each foot, and another holds or sits on his head. If they don't hold him well, give them a cut or two with the whip, and I warrant you they will hold him still enough, if they have to take their teeth." So much for the testimony of a planter with respect to the driving of slaves in a neighborhood where they are very well treated." With regard to the process of getting slaves up to their ne-plus in cotton picking, the same man says: "There is no specified quantity which is required of each hand; but measures are taken

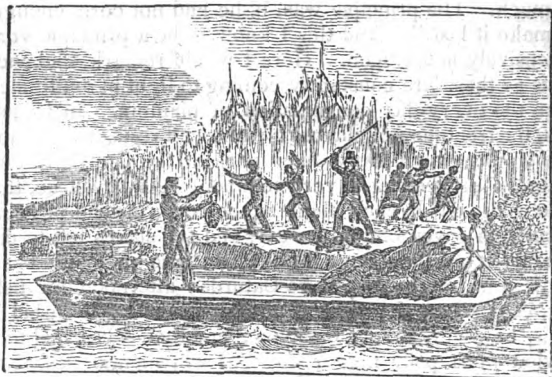
to find out how much each can do when put to his possibilities. Sometimes a dollar or some other prize is set up to the one who will pick most cotton in a day. A smaller prize is proposed to second-rate hands, and so on. If this does not succeed with all, they are whipped up all day to make them do their best. When they think they have got a fellow up to high-water mark, as it is called, they weigh the cotton he has picked during the day; then they weigh it every night afterwards, and if he falls short any considerable amount, he is flogged. The number of lashes given is from thirty to two hundred." This is done with a whip from seven to nine feet in length, made by plating leather over a short stock above two feet long, and then continued out into a long heavy lash. It is an instrument of terrible severity. Its crack can be heard distinctly from half a mile to a mile. The preceding facts and statements respect the general practice with regard to driving. There are many exceptions to the general rule on both sides; some are much more mild and some as much more severe. As evidence of the latter I will state one fact out of many within my knowledge, which, however, I did not receive from an overseer or owner. It came, however, from such a source that I have no doubt of its correctness. The overseer on Mr. ——'s plantation, near Natchez, two or three years ago, found some difficulty in getting his hands to pick as much cotton in a day as he wished. Accordingly he took to the whip. He commenced on Wednesday and whipped all his hands, (about fifty,) twice round; Thursday he whipped them all three times; and Friday he whipped them all once. Saturday he was absent. Monday he returned and whipped ten of the hands once, and so tapered down to the common whipping level. Some few probably escaped some of the floggings each day; but not enough to be noticed by my informant in his statement, though he resided on the place at the time, and was intimately acquainted with the particulars. The floggings were regular, and of course ranged from thirty lashes upwards. And now, Mr. Editor, I leave you and your readers to judge whether the slaves at the South are over-driven, and whether this is the kind of usage that free laborers at

the North would like to submit to. I now proceed to show that they are under-fed. But, in the first place, I will say that the stories that have been sometimes circulated at the North, about the planters at the South feeding their slaves on cotton-seed, is all a humbug. There may have been some instances of the experiment's being tried; but that it is commonly or even occasionally brought into regular practice, is false. The general rule of feeding, is to give just what will supply the demands of nature and no more. Slaves are almost universally allowed. Their rations are usually a peck of meal and three or three and a half pounds of meat a week. This is dealt out on some plantations weekly, and on others daily: which is the more common practice, I am not able to say. Some add a half pint or a pint of molasses a week. As a general thing the bread stuff is given them ground, and not whole as has been sometimes represented. On most plantations there is a cook who prepares their breakfast and dinner, which are always eaten in the field. Their suppers they prepare for themselves after they return from work. Some allowance them only in meat, giving what meal they want; the general rule, however, is a peck of meal and three pounds of meat a week. This allowance is frequently very much shortened when corn or meat are scarce or high. So that on almost every plantation the hands suffer more or less from hunger at some season of almost every year. I have conversed with some very candid slaves on this subject; and they say that they can do very well on a peck of meal and three and a half pounds of meat a week, except in the winter, when their appetites are keener and crave particularly more meat. This accords with universal experience. The appetite is always keener, particularly for flesh, in cold weather than in hot. They say, moreover, that they by no means always get their full allowance, and that they often suffer much from hunger. The truth of this I could establish by a multitude of facts from various sources. But aside from the occasional under-feeding that takes place on most plantations, there are many who are notorious as over-drivers and under-feeders, and are talked about as such; so that if the



northern folks deny that this is often the case, they deny what their better informed neighbors at the South openly talk about as notorious. Why, a few days ago, I heard a planter and his wife talking about the health of a neighboring plantation. The lady entertained the opinion that it was sickly, and as evidence mentioned the large number of negroes that died during last summer. The gentleman replied, that "it was no wonder, the owner starved them so much. His principle was, if he had not corn enough, to make it last." And this I know to be a principle very extensively acted upon. Here I would remark, that such facts as these are constantly coming to light in multitudes, from the every-day conversation of planters. In Louisiana, the treatment of slaves, in almost all respects, is doubtless worse than in any other part of the United States. There, short feeding is very common. And it is true, that among the old French planters, the corn, instead of being ground, is given out in the ear, and the slaves left to dispose of it as they can. They are also in many cases allowed no meat; but have Saturday afternoon for fishing, &c., when the work is not too crowding to forbid it. This, however, is very common; and then—yes, and then "what must poor nigger do?" I will mention a fact to illustrate this statement. It was told me by the Captain of a boat with whom I am well acquainted, and whom I know to be a man of genuine integrity. He was passing down the Mississippi with a flat-boat load of pork. As he was floating along the levee near the shore, between Baton Rouge and New-Orleans, he saw a negro whose emaciated countenance and downcast look attracted his attention. He hailed him and entered into conversation with him. Among other things he asked him where he was from. "Oh master," says he, "thank God, from good old Kentucky." "Had you rather live in Kentucky than here?" "Oh yes, master, there I had plenty to eat, but here I am most starved. I have not tasted meat for months." By this time several others had made their appearance, who joined the first in his testimony about starvation. The captain now commenced throwing out a few joints and other bits of not much account, for their relief. On see-

ing this, several others ran down from the neighboring quarters to share the spoils. But scarce had they reached the levee, when a white man appeared also, raving and swearing most furiously; and seizing a club, about the size and length of a common hoop-pole, he commenced mauling them over the head with all his might. Two or three he knocked down on the spot, and others escaped severely



wounded. It is not from such isolated facts as these that I draw my conclusions respecting the commonness of bad feeding: I mention this to give a specimen of the nature and extent of the suffering. It is from other data that I judge of its prevalence. I will now give a brief recapitulation. On a few plantations there is no suffering for want of food, such as it is, though on all it is so coarse and so unvaried that the poorest laborers at the North would most bitterly complain of it. On the majority of plantations the feeding supplies the demands of nature tolerably well, except in the winter and at some other occasional times. There is always a good deal of suffering on them from hunger in the course of the year. On many plantations, and particularly in Louisiana and among the French planters, the slaves are in a condition of almost utter famishment during a great portion of the year. And

now I ask, are not the slaves also under-fed? Let a man pass through the plantations where they fare best and see fifty or sixty hands, men and women, sitting down on the furrows where their food-cart happens to overtake them, and making their meal of a bit of corn-bread and water, and he will think it is rather hard fare. This is not unfrequently the case on plantations where they are considered well fed. For it will be seen that three and a half pounds of meat would allow but a very small slice if used at every meal. But let us look at it in its best form. A bit of corn-bread, three ounces of meat, and a little molasses. And this, morning, noon and night—night, noon and morning. Suppose a contractor on one of our northern canals or rail-roads were to give his hands this fare, what would be the consequence? Why they would very probably take the contractor, give him a sound flogging, tar and feather him, and quit his employ. Everybody knows that such a contractor could get nobody to work for him. But “the southern slaves are better off than northern free laborers.” The proof is above.

I will now say a few words about treatment and condition in general. That flogging is very common and severe, appears from what has been already said. But those facts were given only in connexion with labor. The picture is not finished. I must now say that floggings for all offences, including deficiencies in work, are frightfully common and most terribly severe. How much is to be added for miscellaneous floggings, to the amount of floggings already stated, cannot be said with any degree of precision. There must of course be a very considerable accession. An overseer from Louisiana says, “On many of the plantations in Louisiana, (and he specified several and gave particulars,) the masters are drunken tyrants and whip their negroes for the slightest offences, not unfrequently just for the sake of whipping them if they can find no other occasion. Their field hands, with few exceptions, are whipped all round as often as once a week. They say they will get ugly if they are not whipped as often as that.” This is said of those who are particularly severe: though he says there are many of them. Now with respect to the

general rule. He says, that "on plantations in Louisiana having fifty hands, the average number of whippings during the whole cotton growing and cotton picking season," (which lasts from April to December,) "is from one to five or six of a day and night." I was careful to make such inquiries into particulars, as to be satisfied that his statements could in the main be relied on. I have since had their truth corroborated from other sources. This overseer plumes himself on being able to manage negroes with but little whipping. He had twenty-two hands, and he says he did not whip more than twelve or fifteen times during picking season. He told me of whipping "one resolute fellow" at the commencement of picking. It was for stealing a few pounds of cotton to put in his daily mess. He first paddled him with a handsaw till he blistered him thoroughly, then whipped him, he thought, about one hundred and fifty lashes, and wound up by rubbing him with salt. Rubbing with salt and red pepper is very common after a severe whipping. The object, they say, is primarily to make it smart; but add, that it is the best thing that can be done to prevent mortification and make the gashes heal. This lenient man gave me another instance of his whipping. The subject was a woman. He says he alternately paddled with a handsaw, whipped, and talked, for about four hours. He paddled her on her buttock and the soles of her feet, and gave her he does not know how many hundred lashes. I will state one or two more facts, to show more clearly the occasions of floggings, and the manner and severity with which they are given. Last summer, the nurse of a family with whom I am very well acquainted, was, for some misdemeanor, put into the stocks and kept there all night. The next morning feeling more sulky than subdued, she took occasion to throw a large dish of water on one of the children. The master was enraged—sent for four hands from the quarters—had her tied down, and the master's daughter, who gave me the information, says she counted two hundred and fifty lashes. A few days ago the mistress, who is a respectable member of the Presbyterian church in Natchez, fancied that this same nurse made too free in correcting the children.

She flew into a passion—seized the broomstick—struck her three times over the head and broke it. She then snatched up a pine stick, about an inch square and three feet long—struck her three times over the head with that and broke it. Such occurrences as these are abundant. Northern free house-servants would hardly be willing to exchange their present treatment for such usage.

The clothing of slaves is about on a par with their food. It is of the coarsest articles and very scanty in amount. However, most of them are clothed. Yet in the worst parts of Louisiana it is not an uncommon thing to see the hands working in the field almost or entirely naked. Their general style of living at home is in keeping with their food and clothing. You will generally find one family occupying a room about twelve or fourteen feet square. In this there are two old crazy bedsteads;—sometimes having on them an old dirty mattress, or straw bed; sometimes a nest of old, ragged, dirty blankets; sometimes a little loose hay or straw, and sometimes nothing at all. The rest of the room is occupied by a rickety table, a few old stools, boxes, baskets, pots, &c. Chairs are seldom found. You may go to twenty cabins and not find half a dozen. The very worst holes you can find in the city of New-York are good specimens of a slave's home. That any southern man should ever represent the condition of the colored people at the North, as worse than that of the slaves at the South, I am perfectly astonished. With the condition of the colored people in several of the northern cities I am well acquainted by personal observation and by report. I am considerably acquainted with it in many others, and I hesitate not to say, that the condition of free people of color in every northern city, is far superior to that of the slaves in the South-west.

But, dear sir, I have not yet come to the bad part of slavery. What you have heard as yet is tolerably good—comparatively. It is in the intellectual and moral condition of slaves that you behold the most hideous features of slavery. On the plantation where I now reside there are about one hundred persons above the age of twelve years, not a soul of whom can read or write. The same

is the case with a large proportion of the plantations throughout the country. I am perfectly safe in saying that, including house-servants and all, both in town and country, there is not one in fifty of the slave population of the South-west than can read or write. Their ignorance on all subjects, especially moral and religious, is astonishing and deplorable. I have attended some of their religious meetings. I mean meetings on the plantation where they have no regular preaching. One of the principal exercises is relating the experience of the week; which consists of all the dreams they have had during that time. I need not describe them. They are just such a medley of every thing as you would naturally suppose would float through an ignorant man's brain when asleep. I was perfectly astonished to see with how much gravity, interest and minuteness they would tell over, as their religious experience, their long, confused and strange dreams, which had no sort of reference, in any possible way whatever, to any thing like religion or spiritual things. One of their number acted as a sort of preacher, and it was curious to see what views he had, or rather what a perfect want there was of any distinct views. Although he attempted to quote scripture very frequently, he did not quote one passage of any length correctly. As a specimen of most of his quotations, I will give one which he used I presume a dozen times, and always as a quotation. Speaking of the punishment of the wicked, he quotes: "It is," he says, (God says,) "like the gnawing of iron bands which amounts to damned." With respect to religion, their minds are like a dungeon with only a few rays of candle-light. Their morals, as might be expected, are wretched. Swearing is universal, except among the professedly pious; who are very few, and even they are not all of them free from it. Sabbath-breaking is co-extensive with profanity. With respect to licentiousness, they are, to a great extent, a common herd. True, marriage is very common; but then, so little sanctity is attached to it, that adultery is very common. Very few are intemperate, because they cannot get whiskey to become intoxicated on. Theft, lying, and indeed almost all the vices of the human race, are

very prevalent. But, though I have said but little compared with what I should wish to say, I find I have already exceeded, by more than half, my intended bounds. In conclusion, I would say that the slaves of the South-west are altogether worse fed, worse clothed, worse lodged, more ignorant, more profane, more licentious, and in short, more vicious in every respect, except intemperance, than the free people of color at the North. I say this in full view of the fact, that statements of a different character have issued, and are still issuing from high authorities. I say it, therefore, advisedly; and I stand ready to sustain myself in the position before both North and South, by the presentation of such a mass of facts and evidence as no candid mind can resist. One word with respect to a thing which may excite in you some surprise. That is, the apparent coldness with which I state such astounding facts. Knowing the subject to be of a somewhat explosive nature, I have taken special pains to keep my brain steeped in ice, lest my feelings, becoming too much excited, should draw me into unfair statements and untenable positions. May the Lord bless your efforts to bring the slaves of the South into as happy a condition as the "free laborers of the North."

Yours truly,

ASA A. STONE.

Rev. JOSHUA LEAVITT.

---

No. II.

NATCHEZ, June 1, 1835.

BROTHER LEAVITT,—Lest a wrong impression should be made by what I said in my former letter respecting the clothing of slaves, I wish to say something more on that subject. I said they were all clothed in some way or other. This should be understood only of adults, and so far as the master is responsible for the furnishment of clothes. Thousands of the creole slaves of Louisiana do go naked, from choice, in the summer time. But I will be more

particular on the subject. Throughout the four States of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, it is very common in the summer time to see flocks of negro children, twelve years old and under, running about the quarters and yards entirely naked, or with only a shirt on. This is done from choice, and the planters are usually very willing to gratify them. In most cases, in the northern and middle parts of those States, they have some sort of clothes that they could wear if they were disposed, though this is not always the case. As you go farther south the practice of having children go naked in the summer time becomes more common, until you come to the sugar country, where it is a common, I may say *general* practice, to raise children without any clothing whatever, either in summer or winter. They commence clothing them when they are of a suitable age to go into the field. In the winter they stay about the fire during the cold nights and mornings, and sometimes have some little articles of clothing. It must be remembered by people at the north, that in sugar-growing countries there are but few frosty nights, and the days are almost always warm. It is a general practice then in the sugar-growing part of Louisiana and Mississippi, to raise negro children, to the age of ten or twelve years, without clothes. You must not understand that there are not many exceptions to this rule. There is every variety of usage in this as well as in most other respects. Some furnish clothes that the children might wear most of the year. Others give some little articles in the winter. But the general practice is as I have stated. The adults in almost all cases have some sort of clothing the year round. But the native negroes seldom wear it in the heat of the day during the summer. Go past a plantation, and you will see forty or fifty in a gang, men and women mingled promiscuously together, naked as they were born. Ask them if they have no clothes, and they will tell you yes, but they choose to work naked. It is cooler, and they have always been used to it. As a proof that they have clothes, you will see part of the gang, those from the upper country, clothed. And early in the morning, when it is cool, or the flies and



moschetoes are bad, you will see the same negroes clothed that will be naked at ten o'clock. I make no comments on the debasing influence of a system that can produce such a state of things. My business at present is only with facts. And that it is common for the creole negroes of Southern Louisiana to go naked in the summer, is notorious throughout the south-west. Now I am on the subject of clothing, I will add a few words to give you some idea of what that is which is usually called being well clothed. It is a state which varies from semi-nudity to being entirely clad with the very coarsest fabrics. In winter the dress is usually made, the coat, of a sort of coarse woollen blanket,—the other garments, of coarse jeans or cotton. In the summer it is made of the coarsest cotton cloth. At this season of the year, go into the field where the hands are at work, on a plantation noted for its slaves being well clothed, and you will see some with old hats on their heads, and some with handkerchiefs tied about them. Some of them will have whole clothes—some will have a sleeve nearly or quite torn off their shirt, or a leg of their pantaloons in the same condition—and some of the women will have on a frock with the sleeves tattered, and the frock itself split halfway up to the waist. From this, as the summit, there is on different plantations every gradation down to perfect nudity.

A few words about the Sabbath labor :

I said in my former letter that odd jobs, such as raisings, movings, &c., were almost universally done on the Sabbath, and that, notwithstanding the law to the contrary, the performance of the regular field labor was very common. I will give the testimony of one man out of the many whom I have heard speak on the subject. He is an intelligent ginwright and carpenter, who has been twelve years in Mississippi and Louisiana working at his trade—building mills, gins, setting up engines, &c. Of course he has had a very good opportunity to become acquainted with the system of slavery and its operations in all their details. I do not select his testimony because it represents things worse than that of others, but because it is more extensive, full and particular, than that of any

other one man; accords perfectly with many others; bears in itself the evidence of intelligence, candor and accuracy, and accords perfectly with my own personal observation so far as it extends. He says, that in the vicinity of Natchez it is very common to make slaves work on the Sabbath in driving seasons, and that as you go back from Natchez, the practice increases in frequency; and that it is common, when their work is a little driving, to make their hands labor on the Sabbath. In the south part of Louisiana, he says, on a majority of the plantations the slaves hardly know when Sabbath comes. They are worked as much on that day as any other. I have abundance of other testimony of planters, overseers, ginwrights, travellers, &c. to the same effect. It is notorious throughout this country.

Yours, truly,

ASA A. STONE.

---

*From the Cincinnati Journal.*

OBITUARY.

Mr. ASA A. STONE, whose death was announced last week, was born in 1810, at Westfield, New-York, of respectable and pious parents, who are still living, to deplore his loss. The foundation of his education was laid at the academy in his native village; after which he became a member of Oneida Institute, Whitesborough, New-York. Here the writer's first acquaintance with him commenced. He well recollects his introduction into that institution, and the favorable impressions made by his first appearance upon the minds of the young gentlemen there. His manly bearing, his remarkably clear and vigorous intellect, together with his frank, unassuming and conciliatory manners, soon commanded their respect, and called forth their warmest admiration. Previous to this period, he had never earnestly turned his attention to the subject of religion. Ardently and enthusiastically engaged in his literary pursuits, and ambitious of distinction, he had overlooked the great end of his being. It was manifest, however, to all his discerning friends, that his moral susceptibilities were of the acutest and highest order, and that all that was necessary to make him an eminently holy man, was to bring around him a class of influences which would thoroughly arouse his attention to the subject.

At the institution in which he now was, that kind of influence was brought to bear upon him best adapted to move a mind constituted like his.

Here he was surrounded by young men like himself pressing ardently forward for high attainments in knowledge and mental discipline; but differing from him entirely in their principles of action. They were devotedly pious. Their religion, too, was a religion purely of principle, not of frames and impulses. They embodied it in action, and lived it out in their daily intercourse. Hence the motives which prompted them to exertion, were widely different from those which operated upon his mind. He soon saw and felt the striking contrast, and though there was no unusual attention to religion at the time, in the institution, he was awakened to a deep and agonizing sense of his wickedness and folly in having so long neglected a subject of such vast moment and magnitude. With his characteristic ardor and promptness, he addressed himself to its investigation, which, in a short time, eventuated in bringing him as we trust to a saving knowledge of the truth. An entire change was now wrought in his moral character, and a new impulse and direction given to all his powers. He at once consecrated himself wholly and unreservedly to the Lord. If previously he had cast the Bible, with its varied treasures of rich and heavenly knowledge, behind his back, and treated the claims of God with contempt, now the Bible became his intellectual and moral sun, and the requisitions of God objects of his supreme regard. It was a favorite sentiment of his—the polar star which guided all his intellectual efforts, and one which he often insisted upon among his fellow-students, with the liveliest interest, that all study should centre in God. By this he meant, that the ultimate end of every study engaged in, should be the farther development and elucidation of the divine character. As God is the source of all truth, he believed the nearer we approached to the comprehension of his infinite mind, the more profound would our knowledge become, and the clearer our perceptions of duty and the higher the motives to its performance. Having taken this high stand in regard to his mental and moral training, it is not wonderful that he should make rapid advances in religious knowledge and holiness of heart. In a few months after his conversion he exhibited all that maturity of Christian character, usually manifested by those who have been faithful disciples in the school of Christ for years. None in the circle in which he moved, were more distinguished for personal piety, active benevolence, and self-denying effort, and none that cast around them a better or holier influence. As an example of his efforts to do good, a single fact may be stated. Soon after his conversion he engaged in the superintendence of a Sabbath school, and Bible class, ten miles distant from his residence. For six months he visited the school regularly, every Sabbath, invariably walking the whole distance. His usual practice was, to go to it Saturday evening, and return Monday morning so early as not to infringe upon any of his duties as a student. He frequently performed the journey before breakfast. Other facts, illustrative of his zeal and self-denial, might be stated, equally striking—but we have not room. In the benevolent operations of the day he took the highest interest. Few were more accurately informed, or had collected a greater amount, and a richer variety of statistics and facts in regard to the great subjects which now agitate the Christian world and absorb its attention. He studied the world and knew it

well, and prayed and labored for its emancipation from sin and woe. On every question involving moral principle, he was always ready to act with promptitude, and was ever found taking sides with his conscience, and what he supposed to be truth. He never parleyed with duty on account of any obloquy or personal inconvenience which might accrue from its performance. His mind was one of the finest mould. In its analytical powers, it was seldom if ever excelled. On abstruse and subtle points which required the clearest discrimination and nicest distinctions, he was perfectly at home, and where most minds faltered, enveloped in darkness, his moved steadily forward, shedding the light of noonday in its path. Intellectual and moral sciences were his delight, and few, very few young men, were better skilled in them. As a student and scholar, he was patient, critical, accurate, and indefatigable. As a man and Christian, he was upright and conscientious, zealous and faithful in the discharge of duty, bold and independent in his bearings, mild and courteous in his manners, liberal and charitable in his feelings towards others. He completed his literary course at Oneida Institute, after which he became a member of Lane Seminary. Here he remained one year, when he felt it his duty to ask for a dismissal from that institution. He now found it necessary to spend some time in procuring funds, before he could proceed farther with his education. With this object in view, he visited the low country, and engaged in a school in the vicinity of Natchez, Mississippi. Here he spent the last eight months of his life. He returned to Cincinnati in the forepart of August. Up to this time, as he stated to his friends, he had enjoyed perfect health, and felt no inconvenience from the southern climate. On Sunday, the 16th inst. he was violently attacked with a fever, and in spite of all human efforts and skill, unchecked, it progressed steadily forward, and terminated his life, on the succeeding Sabbath, at ten o'clock, A. M.

His fever partook so much of the typhus character for the most of the time, that he lay in a state of stupor. But in the little seasons of respite granted him, when his intellectual powers beamed forth in their wonted vigor and clearness, he seemed to be perfectly aware of his situation, and manifested the most entire resignation to the will of God. It cost him, however, a great struggle to give up those high hopes and extensive plans which he had formed for future usefulness. He prayed most importunately, that he might let go his last hold on the world, and called upon his friends to join in the petition.

He expressed the deepest sense of his own unworthiness. His trust was wholly in the Saviour. Before his disease had assumed its most alarming appearance, he dictated a short epistle to his parents. In which he says: "Probably I may get well, but it is nowise certain. I wish you to have the most perfect assurance that I am entirely resigned to the will of my Heavenly Parent. He is too kind to do any thing wrong. My disease has been of such a sleepy nature that I have had no vivid emotions of any sort, but have been favored with much peace and composure of mind—have had sweet communion with God." At a future period, when it was evident he must die, he was asked if he had any thing more he wished to say to his parents. "Tell them," said he, "that they are in the hands of a good being; it is the

best thing I can say to them." On Sabbath morning, reviving from a sinking fit, during which he was thought to be dying, he suddenly looked up. His eyes glowed with an inexpressible and unearthly brightness. He exclaimed—oh Lord! *glorious! glorious!* Upon those standing round his bedside, it produced indescribable emotions. In a moment every cheek was suffused with tears. We all felt an oppressive sense of the goodness of God to our dear departing brother. It seemed like a direct manifestation of the divine presence to his soul, to cheer and strengthen it for its conflict with the last enemy. He immediately sunk back to his former lethargic state, from which he was never again aroused. Thus lived and died Asa A. Stone. In his death, the church has lost a son of the highest promise—the world a warm and efficient friend. Many will be the tears shed over his premature departure, and long will he live embalmed in the memory of those who shared his friendship, knew his worth, and felt the vivifying influence of his example.

"Thou art gone to the grave—but we will not deplore thee,  
Though sorrows and darkness encompass the tomb,  
The Saviour has passed through its portals before thee,  
And the lamp of his love is thy guide through the gloom.

Thou art gone to the grave—we no longer behold thee,  
Nor tread the rough paths of the world by thy side,  
But the wide arms of mercy are spread to enfold thee,  
And sinners may hope since the Saviour hath died."

---

*From the Ohio Atlas.*

## SLAVERY IN FLORIDA.

### No. I.

NEAR TALLAHASSEE, May 11, 1835.

\* \* \* \* \* Your letter was like a cordial to the famishing. Amidst the moral darkness and death around me, the sounds of life from afar cheer the spirits, and give trembling faith to the prayer for the speedy dawn of day.

I saw little, very little, of slavery at St. Augustine. It is in the country, on plantations, that most of the rigors of tyranny are felt. You ask for facts relative to slavery in general. The request is *too general*. I might fill sheets, and still not give any information upon the particular point

you wished. Ask definite questions, and as far as I can ascertain facts respecting them, your questions shall be faithfully answered. In speaking of slavery as it is, I hardly know where to begin. I consider the physical sufferings of the slaves as by no means the greatest evil of slavery. The contemplation of the laws of most of the southern States, which consign the mind of the colored man to endless night, and which leave no measures untried to sink him to a level with the brute, awakens in me stronger indignation than his groans under the lash. But the physical condition of the slave is far from being accurately known at the north. Gentlemen *travelling* in the south can know nothing of it. They must make the south their residence; they must live on plantations before they can have any opportunity of judging of the condition of the slave. I resided in Augustine five months, and had I not made *particular* inquiries, which most northern visitors very seldom or never do, I should have left there with the impression that the slaves were generally very *well* treated, and were a happy people. Such is the report of many northern travellers who have no more opportunity of knowing their real condition than if they had remained at home. What confidence could we place in the reports of the traveller, relative to the condition of the Irish peasantry, who formed his opinion from the appearance of the waiters at a Dublin hotel, or the household servants of a country gentleman? And it is not often on plantations even, that *strangers* can witness the punishment of the slave. I was conversing the other day with a neighboring planter, upon the brutal treatment of the slaves which I had witnessed: he remarked, that had I been with him I should not have seen this. "When I whip niggers, I take them out of sight and hearing of the house, and no one in *my* family knows it. I would not on any consideration harden and brutalize the minds of my children by suffering them to witness a negro whipping." Such being the difficulties in the way of a stranger's ascertaining the treatment of the slaves, it is not to be wondered at that gentlemen, of undoubted veracity, should give directly false statements relative to it. But facts cannot lie, and in giving these I

confine myself to what has come under my own personal observation.

The negroes commence labor by daylight in the morning, and, excepting the ploughboys, who must feed and rest their horses, do not leave the field till dark in the evening. They carry with them corn-meal wet with water, and at noon build a fire on the ground and bake it in the ashes. After having finished their field labors, they are occupied till nine or ten o'clock in *doing chars*, such as grinding corn, (as all the corn in the vicinity is ground by hand) chopping wood, taking care of horses, mules, &c., and a thousand things necessary to be done on a large plantation. If any extra job is to be done, it must not hinder the "niggers from their work, but must be done in the night." After the labors of the day are over, they take their second meal of ashcake. Some planters allow them meat. On Sunday, after the corn is shelled and rations are given for the week, the negro has usually the command of his time, though *this* day is not *always* allowed. It is spent in cultivating their "patches" if they have any, in *building* or repairing their huts, in "toting" firewood for the week, and if they can get permission, in visiting their friends and relatives on other plantations, &c. &c. In describing the labors of the slave, I of course can speak of the usages of but few plantations. *I state what I see*, and my personal acquaintance relative to the domestic arrangements of plantations cannot extend far. Some planters, I am told, give tasks which can be finished before night, but I know of none such. One planter I *do know* of, who sometimes gives tasks, and if by extraordinary exertion they finish before dark, it is increased the next day, and the slave is whipped if he does not finish it.

I asked an old man I saw the other night, making fence by torch-light, if he was tired when he came from the field. "One can't help being tired," said he, "beginning before we can well tell the cotton from the grass, and working without stopping till dark." "Don't you stop at all?" "Just long enough to eat our bread at noon, sir: men grow mighty *pushing* when they are trying to get rich," &c. &c. "I'd be mighty glad," says one, "if I

could be free; I'd work mighty hard to earn money to buy myself if I could get a chance." I told him he would have to work if he was free. "I know it," he said, "but I wouldn't work nights. We didn't have to work nights in Virginia, but folks are mighty pushing about here." I told him that he would fare better to be faithful and contented, for he could not become free. "Not if massa give me free?" "No." "*That's hard,*" with a sigh—"twan't so in Virginia; there was a heap of free black folks there." There is a good deal of contention among planters, who shall make the most cotton to the hand, or, who shall drive their negroes the hardest; and I have heard bets made and staked upon the issue of the crops. Col. W. was boasting of his large crops, and swore that "he made, for his force, the largest crops in the country." He was disputed, of course. On riding home in company with Mr. C., the conversation turned upon Col. W. My companion remarked, that though Col. W. had the reputation of making a large crop, yet he could beat him himself, and did do it last year. I remarked that I considered it no honor to Col. W. to drive his slaves to death to make a large crop. I have heard no more about large crops from him since. Drivers or overseers usually drive the slaves worse than masters. Their reputation for good overseers depends in a great measure upon the crops they make, and the death of a slave is no loss to them. But I have no room to write farther. In my next I will speak of the punishment inflicted on the slave.

---

## No. II.

TALLAHASSEE, June 9, 1835.

I promised in my last to give you some account of the treatment of the slaves. On this head I probably can say nothing new. You know the truth already. I knew it before I came here. Yet I hoped to have found the facts exaggerated. I had heard of females stripped and exposed to the insulting gaze and cruel lash of the driver. I have



seen a woman, a mother, compelled, in the presence of her master and mistress, to *hold up her clothes*, and endure the whip of the driver on the naked body for more than twenty minutes, and while her cries would have rent the heart of any one, who had not hardened himself to human suffering. Her master and mistress were conversing with apparent indifference. What was her crime? She had a task given her of sewing which she *must finish* that day. Late at night she finished it; but the stitches were too long, and she must be whipped. The same was repeated three or four nights for the same offence. I had heard of the whipping-post, and the extent of its use. I have seen a man tied to a tree, hands and feet, and receive three hundred and five blows with the paddle\* on the fleshy parts of the body. Two others received the same kind of punishment at the time, though I did not count the blows. One received two hundred and thirty lashes. Their crime was stealing. One of them had asked for meat, saying that he could not work without it. He was refused the meat, and with a few others killed and secreted a hog of his master's. They had nearly finished the pork, when it was found, and being charged with stealing it, they did not deny it, but one of them remarked with unusual firmness, that he must have meat, he could not work on [corn] bread. (His master owns from eighty to one hundred hogs.) I have frequently heard the shrieks of the slaves, male and female, accompanied by the strokes of the paddle or whip, when I have not gone near the scene of horror. I knew not their crimes, excepting one woman, which was stealing *four potatoes* to eat with her bread! So much have I seen on one plantation. Of the *general* treatment of the slaves, I can judge only from a few facts which I accidentally learn. Masters are not forward to publish their "domestic regulations," and as neighbors are usually several miles apart, one's observation must be limited. Hence the few instances of cruelty which break out can be but a fraction of what is practised. A planter, a professor of religion, in conversation upon the univer-

\* A piece of oak timber, three and a half feet long, flat and wide at one end.

sality of whipping, remarked that "a planter in G——, who had whipped a great deal, at length got tired of it, and invented the following *excellent* method of punishment, which I saw practised while I was paying him a visit. The negro was placed in a sitting position, with his hands made fast above his head, and his feet in the stocks, so that he could not move any part of the body. The master retired, intending to leave him till morning, but we were awakened in the night by the groans of the negro, which were so doleful that we feared he was dying. We went to him, and found him covered with a cold sweat, and almost gone. He could not have lived an hour longer. Mr.—— found the 'stocks' such an effective punishment, that it almost superseded the whip."

"How much do you give your niggers for a task while hoeing cotton," inquired Mr. C—— of his neighbor Mr. H——.

H. "I give my men an acre and a quarter, and my women an acre."\*

C. "Well, that is a fair task. Niggers do a heap better if they are drove pretty tight."

H. "Oh yes, I have driven mine into complete subordination. When I first bought them they were discontented, and wished me to sell them, but I soon whipped *that* out of them; and they now work very contentedly!"

C. "Does Mary keep up with the rest?"

H. "No, she does'nt often finish the task alone; she has to get Sam to help her out after he has done his, *to save her a whipping.* There's no other way but to be severe with them."

C. "No other, sir, if you favor a nigger you spoil him."

"But," said I, "would not a systematical course of kind treatment be more effectual than so much whipping?"

H. "Oh sir, I always treat my niggers well. There are many who half starve their niggers, and give them nothing but corn to eat; but I always give mine meat. They do much better, and are not nigh so apt to steal

\* Cotton is planted in drills about three feet apart, and is hilled like corn.

and run away; besides, I think we *ought* to give them enough to eat, when they *earn all we have.*"

C. "Oh yes, *treat* them well. But 'twont do to yield an inch to them," &c.

The conversation continued, during which I expressed my utter abhorrence of the whole system of slavery. I make little more reserve in expressing my opinions here than at the north, and I find people generally agree with me, that slavery is a curse to the southern country, and *slavery in the abstract* is wrong, but *practical slavery* is quite a different thing. I do not believe there have been five slaves freed in Florida since its cession to the United States. The Spanish laws favored emancipation, but as one old negro expressed it, "Nobody gets free since Spanish times." The laws of Florida, *sanctioned by the United States general government, forbid emancipation.* I mentioned to one negro that I had heard of a man in East Florida who allowed his slaves wages, and when they amounted to his price and interest, the slaves were free; says he, "that man was no American, I reckon. He must have been a Yankee or a Spaniard."

Another instrument of torture is sometimes used, how extensively I know not. The negro, or, in the case which came to my knowledge, the negress, was compelled to stand barefoot upon a block filled with sharp pegs and nails for two or three hours. In case of sickness, if the master or overseer thinks them seriously ill, they are taken care of, but their complaints are usually not much heeded. A physician told me that he was employed by a planter last winter to go to a plantation of his in the country, as many of the negroes were sick. Says he—"I found them in a most miserable condition. The weather was cold, and the negroes were barefoot, with hardly enough of *cotton* clothing to cover their nakedness. Those who had huts to shelter them were obliged to build them nights and Sundays. Many were sick, and some had died. I had the sick taken to an older plantation of their master's, where they could be made comfortable, and they recovered. I directed that they should not go to work till after sunrise, and should not work in the rain till their health

became established. But the overseer refusing to permit it, I declined attending on them farther. I was called," continued he, "by the overseer of another plantation, to see one of the men. I found him lying by the side of a log in great pain. I asked him how he did; 'Oh,' says he, 'I'm most dead, can live but little longer.' How long have you been sick? 'I've felt for more than six weeks as though I could hardly stir.' Why didn't you tell your master you was sick? 'I couldn't see my master, and the overseer always whips us when we complain; I could not stand a whipping.' I did all I could for the poor fellow, but his *lungs were rotten*. He died in three days from the time he left off work." The cruelty of that overseer is such that the negroes almost tremble at his name. Yet he gets a high salary, for he makes the largest crop of any other man in the neighborhood, though none but the hardiest negroes can stand it under him. "That man," says the Doctor, "would be hung in my country." [He was a German.]

THE END.

7 NO 67

