



*ADVANCE SHEET – July 8, 2022*

## President's Letter

Frederick Law Olmsted is best known as the landscape architect who designed Central Park and Prospect Park in New York City, the Biltmore Estate in North Carolina, and numerous other projects. His firm, continued by his sons, also designed projects in Baltimore, notably those in Homewood near Johns Hopkins. However, his earlier career is also notable. From December 1852 to February 1854 he was employed as a full-time journalist by the New York Daily Times and in that capacity prepared a series of fifty lengthy articles on conditions in the American South, later collected in *A Journey in the Seaboard Slave States* and in volume II of his collected works published by the Johns Hopkins University Press. After his journalistic career, he became Executive Director of the United States Sanitary Commission, a precursor of the American Red Cross, which ran hospitals and provided relief during the American Civil War. He abhorred slavery, while indulging few illusions about the debased condition of both the blacks and the poor whites of the South. His all-but-forgotten writings on this subject earned him a half-chapter in Edmund Wilson's *Patriotic Gore* on the literature of the American Civil War.

During the early part of the War he took a special interest in the blacks of the Sea Islands off Georgia, whose crops had been seized by the union armies and who received no compensation other than alms. He expressed his views on this subject in lengthy interviews with both Secretary of War Edwin Stanton and Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase. Chase he found inattentive; Stanton he later described as “a bad man, a coward, a bully, and a swindler.” They appointed someone else to oversee the Sea Islands after thwarting a bill he sponsored. He considered, probably with reason, that he had “given more thought to the special question of the proper management of negroes in a state of limbo between slavery and freedom than any one else in the country.” Broadly, he favored an arrangement that would make them temporary wards of the national government, which would assure them of bare subsistence, offer them profitable employment, guard against their persecution, and most of all, enforce codes of behavior before magistrates. Ultimately, under the influence of the Radical Republicans, a Freedmen's Bureau was created discharging the first and third of these objects but not the second and fourth; it died after a few years. The regulating of blacks was left to the infamous state Black Codes, operated by former masters and few incentives were provided to self-sufficiency.

The most concise and eloquent of Olmsted's expression of his views is that contained in a letter to President Lincoln dated March 8, 1862:

“[T]he duty and functions of government with regard to the negroes is included in and limited by these two propositions:

1. To save the lives of the negroes, except possibly as death may be a natural punishment of neglect of duty.

2. To train or educate them in a few simple, essential and fundamental social duties of free men in civilized life: as, first, to obtain each for himself the necessities of life, independent of charity; second, to regard family obligations; third, to substitute for subordination to the will of their former owners, submission to Laws—or rules of social comity with the understanding that these are designed to correspond to the natural laws of their happiness; fourth, to discriminate between just authority under the laws as above, and despotic authority—between the duty of obedience to administrators of law and obedience to masters by might.”

“If the two classes of duties (governmental and charitable) are not absolutely inconsistent one with another, the exercise of the latter by the same person with the former will do more to maintain a confusion of ideas which exists in the minds of the negroes and from which it is a large part of the duty of government as an economic operation to free them.”

The letter concludes with the following incandescent words, neglected in our time:

“It would be better for the state, and more merciful to the negroes to guillotine them at once, then to educate them by any means in beggary, distrust of themselves and cowardly hatred of the first duties of freedom.”

Our leaders still talk of reparations, not a revived Civilian Conservation Corps; of ‘affirmative action’, not serious vocational education.

In his later years, Olmsted, under the influence of a philanthropist Robert Treat Paine, produced a proposal for ‘outdoor gymnasias’ on vacant city-owned lots that also is still worthy of attention

We reproduce here the five of his letters from the South included in the Library of America edition of his works, his letter to President Lincoln, and his memorandum on outdoor gymnasias

George W. Liebmann



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## **A Look at Peru: From the Viewpoint of a Prominent Citizen**

On Tuesday, July 12, 2022, at 12:30 p.m., Roberto Zalles of Peru will speak on the current state of affairs in his country. The lecture will be by way of **Zoom**.

Mr. Zalles will examine the current political/economic situation in Peru and the prospects for the future. He will provide a brief summary of the events leading to present conditions, including a look at Pedro Castillo's disastrous Administration and possible outcomes.

Roberto Zalles is currently a Managing Director of LW Partners, a boutique investment banking group of companies active throughout Latin America. Mr. Zalles has over 30 years of experience in financial services focused primarily on the Andean countries. He has held senior positions at Citibank N.A. and Bear Stearns in New York during the 1980s and 1990s. More recently he ran his own financial consulting firm in Peru providing advisory services to major U.S. investment banks and regional corporations and has served on the Boards of Directors of several companies in the region. Mr. Zalles has also been active in the mining industry where he was Director and President of the Comsur/Minera Group, owner and operator of several tin, gold, zinc, silver and lead mines in Bolivia and Argentina. Mr. Zalles holds a degree in Economics from Yale University.

**Moderator:** The moderator for the program will be George W. Liebmann, Esquire, President of the Library Company of the Baltimore Bar. Mr. Liebmann is the author of numerous books, articles and commentaries on a myriad of subjects related to government and political processes as well as a former classmate of Mr. Zalles.

**Upcoming Presentation:** Later this summer the Library will be hosting a companion program when the speaker will be Mr. Mario Adler of **Brazil**. The focus of his presentation will be the present and future Presidents of Brazil and what has currently been taking place there: in particular, crises such as Covid-19, underemployment and hunger and how all of it has been handled by the government.

**Time:** 12:30 p.m., Tuesday, July 12, 2022.

**R.S.V.P.:** If you would like to attend telephone the Library at 410-727-0280 or reply by e-mail to [jwbennett@barlib.org](mailto:jwbennett@barlib.org).

## **A Country Worth Fighting For**

A friend of mine said the other day that “This was not their country anymore.” You hear so many people say it today, those of all ages and ideologies. It seems to be the new infectious disease of the day. I tried to remember back, during my sixty-three years and my reading of history, to whether it has always been this way or whether it is a relatively recent phenomenon. Of course between 1861 and 1865 the Southern States were adamant about the point, that it was not their country, while the States of the North were just as adamant that it was. Now, elections, court decisions, crime, police misconduct, everything seems to have the potential to produce those magic words “this is not my country anymore.”

I remember when our children got married, those bittersweet days when you lose a son or daughter, but also, in a very real sense, gain a son or daughter. We would always tell them that with the good there would be a large measure of bad. If what you have is good though, you have to fight for it, and remember that it is truly in “good times and in bad.”

For myself, it always has been and always will be “my country, right or wrong.” This is not to say, however, that you should do nothing about what you perceive to be a wrong or an injustice. From abolitionists, to suffragettes, to freedom riders, Americans throughout the history of this nation have taken action not because it was not their country, but because it was, and they wanted to make it a better place. We should all be grateful for what they did and the selfless manner in which they did it.

Throughout the history of this country, or at least a very large portion of it, 1840 to be exact, there has been the Bar Library. Through bust and boom, very bad times to very good, there has been the Bar Library. It exists not on its own, not for itself, but because of, and for, all of you. I ask for your continued support by way of memberships and any and all other support you might be able to give the Library, to let it continue to do what it has done over the course of the past 182 years.

Thank you and I look forward to seeing you soon.

Joe Bennett



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# FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED

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WRITINGS ON LANDSCAPE,  
CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

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Charles E. Beveridge, *editor*



THE LIBRARY OF AMERICA



"THIS BEGGARLY FARMING": MARCH 1853

*The South*

LETTERS ON THE PRODUCTIONS, INDUSTRY AND  
RESOURCES OF THE SOUTHERN STATES

NUMBER SEVEN

*The Connection of Slavery with Agricultural Prosperity in Virginia—Discussion of the Comparative Value of Free and Slave Labor—The Amount Accomplished in a Day by a Slave and by a Free Laborer Compared—Labor and Wealth—The Humiliating Position of Virginia—Its Probable Cause.*

*To the Editor of the New-York Daily Times:*

I did not intend when I commenced writing these letters to give much attention to the subject of Slavery; but the truth is, the character of the whole agriculture of the country depends upon it. In every department of industry I see its influence, vitally affecting the question of profit, and I must add that everywhere, and constantly, the conviction is forced upon me, to a degree entirely unanticipated, that its effect is universally ruinous. My first impression upon crossing the country was, that to account for the general superior prosperity asserted of the North, we need go no further than to examine the soil; the

main source of wealth at the South being agriculture, no cheapness of labor could make profitable the culture of such poor soil as that which at first fell under my observation. It did, indeed, occur to me that only by the low value of slave labor, could such land have been so long retained in cultivation. Would you think it possible that a man could live by cultivating ground that only produced three bushels of wheat to the acre? The very slightest possible cultivation of the soil, and the mere seed and sowing of it without the slightest tillage, would cost a northern farmer as much as the value of the crop. Such crops are common in Virginia. I do not exaggerate in saying so. I have heard of repeated instances where the crop of a whole, large plantation was not over three bushels to the acre! Without asserting, as, however, I am much inclined to think, and as many Virginians confess to me they are themselves convinced, that the system of slavery is responsible, by its enervating effects upon the minds of the superior race, for this beggarly farming; there is not room for the shadow of a doubt across my mind, that slave labor makes the cost of cultivating such lands greater, and the profit (!) less, than it would be under free labor.

But the soils from which I derived the impression I have spoken of, are by no means to be taken as a criterion of the ordinary lands of this country; I have since seen large tracts of as fine wheat land, deep and rich upland of clayey loam; or alluvial meadows of the best description of soil for general cropping, that I ever saw in any country, and even on the same old piney land—or worn out tobacco fields—under a system of agriculture of moderate enterprise and skill, I have found that fair crops of all sorts can be made. And under free labor, and the direction of men exercising the ordinary intelligence and skill applied to Northern farms, I am wholly convinced that there is not in all the Northern States, or in all of Europe, a district of country where the business of farming would be so profitable, as in Eastern Virginia. I shall hereafter discuss the inducements offered under present circumstances to emigration. As to the capability of the soil, I heard this morning that a Northern man last year purchased a farm in Southern Virginia, but a few miles from a railroad, and but twenty from a seaport, for which he paid \$5 an acre. It had not ordinarily produced wheat at the rate of five bushels the acre, and had never been plowed over



four inches in depth; upon which, by plowing eight inches, turning up not only virgin soil, but clay to mix with the sand of the surface, and applying 150 barrels of guano, costing \$3.75 to the acre, he obtained a crop averaging twenty bushels an acre, and from which he realized much more than sufficient money to pay for the cost of the land it grew upon, and the expense of growing it. I have seen land of a similar description, which has been sold, with its improvements, during the last year, for \$2.25 an acre.

As I may hereafter wish sometimes to assume the superior cheapness or economy of free labor, I will in addition to the reasons I have before given for it, state here a few more.

I have compared notes with several farmers, planters and manufacturers, capitalists and contractors, and I arrive at the conclusion to which they have without one exception conceded, that the wages of laborers, measuring them merely by power of muscle, or brute force, without regard to energy or will, are at this time at least 25 per cent. higher in Eastern Virginia, than in the State of New-York.

In addition to this difference there is to be deducted from the profit of the slave the loss of time occasioned by his sickness (or absence from any cause); which loss does not fall upon the proprietor under the free labor system, and the temptation to counterfeit which is not offered to the laborer. The loss of this to the slave farmer is of various consequence, sometimes small, often excessively embarrassing, always a subject of anxiety and suspicion. A farmer told me for the purpose of showing me the weakness of the family tie and the promiscuous intercourse among slaves, that having allowed one of his men, a mechanic, to work some time in a shipyard at a city, soon after his return, and at a time when he was pressed for labor, he suddenly found twelve hands, male and female, and all of them married parties, laid up with a disgusting disease, and was obliged to procure, at a great expense, a physician to come from town twice a week to examine the whole force, to prevent its spread among them. After all, an old "nigger doctor," a slave in the neighborhood, was more successful in curing them with an empirical remedy, than the regular practitioner. I mention this as indicating that this complaint is not unfrequent among them. A decoction of pine leaves is one of the negro remedies.

As to sham-sickness or "playing 'possum" I heard much complaint of it, and it is said to be nearly as hard to treat negroes in sickness as it is children, because they use their imagination so much, greatly puzzle the doctors by lying as to their symptoms, and from their neglect or refusal to take the remedies left for them. They will generally conceal pills in their mouth, declare they have swallowed them, and it is only discovered that they have not by their failing to have any effect. This is a general custom, but probably arose from the fact that unless very disagreeably ill they are loth to recover from that which exempts them from labor.

Amusing incidents illustrating this difficulty I have heard, showing that the slave rather enjoys getting a severe wound that lays him up. He has his hand smashed by accident, and says: "Bless de Lord—de hand b'long to massa. I don't reckon I'se got no more corn to hoe dis year, for sartin."

On the other hand the suspicion that when a hand complains he is "playing 'possum" and the refusal to allow him to "knock off" often aggravates what might be otherwise a slight and temporary indisposition, into a long and serious illness. From this reason, the labor of women on a plantation, as a large planter assured me, "actually does not pay for their salt." After they get to the "breeding age" they do no more work of any account. "They are forever complaining of 'irregularities.' They don't come to the field, and you ask what's the matter, and the old nurse always nods her head and says, 'Oh, *she's not well*, sir; *she's not fit to work*, sir,'—and you have to take her word for it."

I believe that the slaves are generally very kindly and considerately treated in sickness, but the profit of slave labor is all the less from this, from the encouragement to the slave to make the most of sickness and so to withdraw his labor and be a mere "bill of expense" to his master.

Then the slaves sometimes *refuse* to labor, or "balk," from mere "rascality," which, as I have before shown, is sufficiently common and inexplicable as to be considered a disease. They are then inconceivably stubborn, and can barely be driven to work by the lash, and in no way restrained from recklessly or malevolently doing much injury to their master's property.

"How do *you* manage, then, when a man misbehaves, or is sick?" I have been asked at this point of the discussion.



"If he is sick, I simply charge against him every half day of the time he is off work, and deduct it from his wages. If he is careless, or refuses to do what in reason I demand of him, I discharge him, paying him wages to the time he leaves. With new men in whom I have not confidence, I make a written agreement, before witnesses, on engaging them, that will permit me to do this. As for 'rascality,' I never had but one case of anything approaching to what you call so. A man contradicted me in the field; I told him to leave his job and go to the house, took hold and finished it myself; then went to the house, made out a written statement of account, counted out the balance in money due him, gave him the statement and the money, and told him he must go, and had not another word with him. I've no doubt he was a good and respectful man to his next employer."

The slave master, in case he finds he has a "tartar" on his hands, has no remedy, if he has hired him, but to ask a deduction of what he has paid from his owner, on the same ground that you would if you had hired a vicious horse, and instead of helping you on your journey he had broken your leg; or, if he is an owner, to *sell* him "to go South."

That the slaves have to be "humored" a great deal, and often cannot be made to do their master's will, is very evident,—I do not think they will do from fear nearly as much as Northern laborers will simply from respect to their contract or regard to their duty. The gentleman I before spoke of as employing white laborers on a farm, had been especially struck with this. A dam had given way, and it was necessary to do a good deal of work very promptly in the water. He was greatly surprised to find how much more readily than negroes his white men would obey his orders, jumping into the water waist deep in the midst of winter without the slightest hesitation or grumbling. He had noticed the same on all emergencies, when it was desirable to work late at night, &c., or to do any very disagreeable job. A farmer in England told me that he had once, in a very bad harvest season, had laborers at work without a wink of sleep for sixty hours, himself heading them, and eating and drinking with them.

Finally, to come to the point of the amount of work which will be done under the Northern and the Southern system. I regret that I cannot get more exact data here. The only close

observation of the work done in a day by slaves that can be fairly compared with that by free laborers, that I have been able to obtain, was made by Mr. T. R. Griscom, of Petersburg; a man remarkable for the accuracy and preciseness of his information on all subjects. I was recommended to call upon him, as a man possessing very intimate knowledge with regard to the agriculture of the district in which he lives, by as strong a pro-Slavery man as I have met. He formerly resided in New-Jersey, and has had the superintendence of very extensive and varied agricultural operations in Virginia.

He tells me he once very carefully observed how much labor was expended in securing a crop of very thin wheat, and found that it took four negroes one day to cradle, rake, and bind one acre. (That is, this was the rate at which the field was harvested.) In the wheat-growing districts of Western New-York, four men would be expected to do five acres of a similar crop.

Mr. Griscom further states, as his opinion, that four negroes do not, in the ordinary agricultural operations of this State, accomplish as much as one laborer in New-Jersey. Upon my expressing my astonishment, he repeated it, as his deliberately formed opinion.

I have since, again called on Mr. Griscom, and obtained permission to give his name with the above statement. He also wishes me to add, that the ordinary waste in harvesting, by the carelessness of the negroes, above that which occurs in the hands of Northern laborers, is large enough to equal what a Northern farmer would consider a satisfactory profit on the crop.

I do not think there is a man in Virginia whose information on this point would be more reliable or whose opinion would be formed with less prejudice to either side and is entitled to greater respect than Mr. Griscom's.

I have at second hand the result of the experience of another man who has superintended extended labors of a similar character, both at the North and in Virginia, which precisely agrees with Mr. Griscom's. I am not able now to see him and obtain the facts directly, but have been promised a statement of them by him in writing.

In a late article by H. M. Brackenridge, in the *National Intelligencer*, copied in the New-York Times of Dec. 29, reproving



the spirit of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and containing many very sensible observations on Slavery, the result, the writer says, of ten years observation and much reflection, it is stated that "the day's labor of the slave is notoriously not more than half that of the white man; and if left to himself (it would be) not more than half that."

Another gentleman here, who formerly resided in Connecticut, told me that he believed that a Northern laborer would finish a negro's day's work by 11 o'clock in the forenoon.

I have stated that I had met no farmer that was not convinced of the superior economy of free-labor (if the slaves were not on their hands and in some way to be provided for), but few however are willing to concede or can believe the difference to be as great as the above opinions would indicate. On mentioning them to one, he remarked, that although the four men might not have done more than at the rate of an acre a day, it must have been because they were not well driven. He thought that if driven hard enough, threatened with punishment, and *punished* if necessary, they would do as much work as it was *possible* for any white man to do. The same man, however, has told me that slaves were very rarely punished—he thought not more than apprentices were at the North—that the driving was almost always left to overseers, who were the laziest and most inefficient dogs in the world—frequently not worth half so much as the slaves they pretended to manage—and that the wages of an overseer were often not more than half as much as one of the negroes put under his control could be hired out for.

A planter on the coast, whom I asked to examine these statements, and my conclusions with regard to this subject, that he might, if he could, refute them, or give me any facts of an opposite character, replied: "Why, I have no doubt you are right, Sir; in general, a slave does not do half the work he easily might, and which, by being harsh enough with him, he can be made to do. When I came into possession of my plantation, I found the overseer was good for nothing, and I soon told him I had no further occasion for his services, and I went to driving the negroes myself. In the morning, when I went out one of them came up to me saying, 'Well, massa, what'll you hab me go at dis mornin?'" "Well, ole man," said I, "you may go to the swamps and cut wood." "Well, massa," said he, "s'pose you wants



me to do kordins we's been use to doin' here: ebery niggar cut a cord o' wood a day.' 'A cord! that's what you have been used to doing, is it?' said I. 'Yes, massa, dat's wot dey always makes a niggar do roun' heah—a cord a day, dat's allers de job.' 'Well, now, ole man,' said I, 'you go and cut me two cords to-day.' 'Oh, massa! two cords! Nobody couldn do dat. Oh! massa, dat's too hard! Nebber heard nobody's cuttin' more 'n a cord in a day roun' heah. No niggar couldn do it.' 'Well, ole man, you have two cords of wood cut to-night, or to-morrow morning you shall get two hundred lashes. Now, go off and be about it.' And he did it, and ever since no negro has ever cut less than two cords a day for me, though my neighbors never get but one cord. It was just so with a great many other things—mauling rails—I always have twice as many rails mauled in a day as it is the custom of the country to expect of a negro, and just twice as many as my negroes always had been made to do before I managed them myself."

Allowing that the opinions of the practical men who have had experience at the North and the South, that I have given, somewhat exaggerate the difference in the amount of work accomplished by a slave and a Northern free laborer (though I did not give them because they were extreme, but because they were the only exact statements that I could obtain)—allowing that I have been unfortunate in this way, and that a longer residence in the State would give me information that would much modify these estimates, there still remains, beyond a doubt, a very great loss in using the labor of the slave. These statements would make the loss between three and four hundred *per cent*. Now although they were the calculations and deliberate estimates of men who had enjoyed a liberal education, and who had unusual facilities for observing both at the North and South—men who employ slaves, and who sustain Southern opinions on the political questions arising from slavery—I am not disposed to insist upon full credit for them. *Cut them down one-half*, and we still have a loss of nearly *one hundred per cent*. Even if you will have them to be utterly mistaken, and calculate that the slaves accomplish equally as much—man for man—as Irishmen under wages contract, yet consider how large a sum would pay for clothes, time lost by sickness or otherwise—five or more additional holidays, which custom gives them, and for

all that they pilfer or damage and destroy through carelessness, improvidence, recklessness and rascality!

Can there be a reasonable doubt that the State of Virginia loses fifty per cent. on the cost of labor, in employing slaves in preference to freemen!

Suppose that half the cost of a crop is expended in the human labor given to it, the profits of the farmers of Virginia would then be increased 25 per cent. per annum, if they could substitute the labor of freemen for that of slaves.

Labor is the creator of wealth. There can be no honest wealth, no true prosperity without it, and in exact proportion to the economy of labor is the cost of production and the accumulation of profit.

Remembering this, I cannot but ask the people of Virginia to read again the facts that follow, which I extract from the leading article of the Richmond *Enquirer* of this date (Dec. 29), and seriously and candidly reflect for themselves with regard to them.

Virginia, anterior to the Revolution and up to the adoption of the Federal Constitution, contained more wealth and a larger population than other States of this Confederacy.

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Virginia, from being first in point of wealth and political power, has come down to the fifth in the former, and the fourth in the latter. New-York, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Ohio stand above her in wealth, and all, but Massachusetts, in population and political power. Three of these States are literally chequered over with Railroads and canals, and the fourth (Massachusetts) with Railroads alone.

But when we find that the population of the single city of New-York and its environs exceeds the whole free population of Eastern Virginia, and the valley between the Blue Ridge and Alleghany, we have cause to feel deeply for our situation. Philadelphia herself contains a population far greater than the whole free population of Eastern Virginia.

—The little State of Massachusetts has an aggregate wealth exceeding that of Virginia by more than one hundred and twenty-six millions of dollars—a State, too, which is incapable of subsisting its inhabitants from the production of its soil. And New-York, which was as much below Massachusetts, at the adoption of the Federal Constitution, in wealth and power, as the latter was below Virginia, now exceeds the wealth of both. While the aggregate



wealth of New-York, in 1850, amounted to \$1,080,309,216, that of Virginia was \$436,701,082—a difference in favor of the former of \$643,608,134. The unwrought mineral wealth of Virginia exceeds that of New-York. The climate and soil are better; the back country, with equal improvements, would contribute as much.

All true, and facts and contrasts more striking and far more humiliating might have been shown you. Why be driven by fanaticism and bigotry to shut your eyes to the most simple and evident explanation of them?

I shall next show why it is not possible for any single farmer or manufacturer to relieve himself of his proportion of this tax to support slavery and increase his products and profits in a corresponding ratio, and make it evident that only by the general action of the people, their “commercial vassalage” can be remedied.

#### FREE LABOR AND SLAVE LABOR: MARCH 1853

### *The South*

#### LETTERS ON THE PRODUCTIONS, INDUSTRY AND RESOURCES OF THE SOUTHERN STATES

#### NUMBER EIGHT

*Why Free Labor is Not More Profitable than Slave Labor, Now, in Virginia—The Difficult Question of Disposing of the Slaves—Their Condition—The Condition of the Free Blacks at the South.*

*To the Editor of the New-York Daily Times.*

In my last, it was made to appear that the cost of employing Slave labor in Virginia over free labor in New-York, was equal to an addition of one dollar to every dollar now expended for labor. This loss, be it remembered, is not a loss merely to the employer, but is a loss to the whole body politic—an abstraction from the general wealth of Virginia, of the United States, and of the world.

And it by no means follows, that, by disposing of his slaves, as things are at present, and hiring free laborers, any farmer in

Virginia can make a saving of 100 per cent. The principle of demand and supply here comes in. The laborer that, in New-York, gives a certain amount of exertion for a certain price, soon finds that for that price here a less amount of work is customarily expected. He adopts slave habits of labor—he suits his wares to the market. He sees that the capitalists of Virginia give a high price for a poor article—he furnishes the poor article. But there are also other laws, besides this of demand and supply, that affect this matter.

“Man is a social being.” The large amount of labor performed in Virginia is and long has been done by negroes. The negroes are a degraded people; degraded not merely by position, but actually immoral, low-lived; without healthy ambition, but little influenced by high moral considerations, and in regard to labor not at all affected by regard for duty. This is always recognized, and debasing fear, not cheering hope, is in general allowed to be the only stimulant to exertion. A capitalist was having a building erected in Petersburg, and his slaves were employed in carrying up the brick and mortar for the masons on their heads; a Northern man standing near remarked to him that they moved so indolently it seemed as if they were trying to see how long they could be in mounting the ladder without actually stopping. The builder started to reprove them, but after moving a step turned back and said, “It would only make them move more slowly still when I am not looking at them, if I should hurry them now—and what motive have they to do better? It’s no concern of theirs how long the masons wait. I am sure if I was in their place I shouldn’t move as fast as they do.”

Now let the white laborer come here from the North or from Europe; his nature demands a social life; shall he associate with the poor, slavish, degraded, low-lived, despised, unambitious negro, with whom labor and punishment are almost synonymous, or shall he be the friend and companion of the white man in whose mind labor is associated with no ideas of duty, responsibility, comfort, luxury, cultivation or elevation and expansion either of mind or estate—as it is, where the ordinary laborer is a free man, free to use his labor as a means of obtaining all these and all else that is to be respected, honored or envied in the world?

Associating with either or both is it possible that he will not



be demoralized, hate labor, give as little of it for his hire as he can, become base, cowardly, faithless—"worse than a nigger."

I ask *you, Virginians*, if this is not so—if you do not know it to be so? Is not this a simple, reasonable, satisfactory explanation of those failures in the substitution of free laborers for slaves to which you are in the habit of referring as settling this question?

See you not that it is Slavery still, that, like the ship-worm, is noiselessly and imperceptibly ever opening the leaks by which your state, the greatest of all, the vanguard of the fleet, rolls helplessly water-logged far astern of all?

Nine out of ten of the thinking men of Virginia are so convinced, and whisper among themselves, what is to be done? And the rest of the crew double-shot the starboard battery, and loudly threaten what they *will do* if we of the North don't mind our business, and quit advising and pitying them, and send back the rats that swim away from them.

Well, it's all very true that we can't help them, and that our attempts to do so only embarrass them, and that we have among us plenty of bad and more weak and foolish people that would do better to mind their own business and leave them to their fate; that we have beams enough in our own eyes; that the condition of *some* of our laborers is bad, as bad as theirs, worse than theirs; that this shows a rottenness in the planks of our system which we would do well to probe and study to mend. I am convinced of it all—the more so, the more sadly and earnestly so, for what I see here. There is wrong in both systems. Too much competition and self-seeking in our labor as there is too little in theirs. They prove it to me; I thank them for it; they cannot object if I, with no unkind or invidious purpose, frankly describe the nature of the evils they themselves have to deal with.

And they must understand that we have an interest and a certain responsibility in whatever of evil belongs to them, as we have in all that concerns the human family. That with a fair understanding of the nature of this evil, and of all its relations, we shall find that we have little or nothing to do about it ourselves, but to quietly wait and pray, for them in wisdom to move, is not improbable; and I hope and believe, that what I shall have occasion to write in regard to it, will favor such an understanding.



A proper appreciation of the difficulties that embarrass the people of the South in connection with the subject of Slavery, that lie in the way of any action favorable to even the amelioration of the condition of the slave by the action of law, would do more to restore friendly feeling and confidence between the two great sections of our country, than all the compromise measures that could be contrived, however strictly and conscientiously carried out. Only let it be known at the North in addition to a slight appreciation of these difficulties, that there was a general disposition to boldly, manfully, look them in the face, and to deal with them in a broad, Statesmanlike and Christianlike spirit, and the fanaticism of Abolition is dead and buried.

Only let the North show a disposition in future to regard the subject of Slavery as one *over which she has no control*, let indignation be quieted and turned to the injustice, and barbarism in her midst, let fierce denunciation and exciting appeals and even senselessly unpractical counsels be silenced, and I rejoice to state my conviction that in Virginia at least, hosts of great, good, and talented men, are all ready and earnestly purposed to give themselves with all their energies to the mighty task.

Even the men who have no concern above dollars and cents are well convinced this day, and it is commonly calculated among them, that if the Slaves could be quietly removed from their limits, the State would fill up so rapidly with free-men, and its sources of wealth would be so much more speedily and economically developed, that in five years' time the increase in the value of all real estate would more than pay for the value that the Slaves are now reckoned by their masters to be worth.

I am ready to give it as my present opinion, after what I have seen already of Slavery, that the African race whether it has been elevated or degraded by subjection to the whites of the South, is in many respects, and shows itself in the majority of instances to be, happier, intellectually, morally and physically, in Slavery than in what passes at the South under the name of Freedom, and that almost is the only freedom that it is practicable at present to be permitted to it.

Slavery in Virginia, up to the present time, however it has improved the general character and circumstances of the race of miserable black barbarians that several generations since were introduced here, has done nothing to prepare it, and is yet doing nothing to prepare it, for the free and enlightened exercise of

individual independence and responsibility. THEREFORE, is Slavery the greatest sin and shame upon any nation or people on God's earth. The slaveholders say that we and others, by our impracticable interference, are responsible for this sin and shame. Let God judge, and let us keep silence.

I wish now to give you some idea of the condition of the freed blacks at the South; in Virginia. I shall incidentally refer to the condition of those at the North.

In one county of Virginia, a few years ago, an inventory and estimate of the value of the property of all the free blacks was made by order of the magistracy. With one exception the highest value placed upon the property of an individual was two dollars and a half (\$2.50.) The person excepted owned one hundred and fifty acres of land, a cabin upon it, a mule and some implements. He had a family, including only his wife and children, of nine. Of provisions for their support, there were in the house, at the time of the visit of the appraisers, a peck and a half of Indian meal and part of a herring. The man was then absent to purchase some more meal, but had no money, and was to give his promise to pay in wood, which he was to cut from his farm. And this was in Winter.

This shows their general poverty. That this poverty is not the result of want of facilities or security for accumulating property, is proved by the exceptional instances of considerable wealth existing among them. An account of the death of a free colored man who devised by will property to the amount of thirty thousand dollars, has been lately in the newspapers. I have ascertained the general accuracy of the narration though one somewhat important circumstance was omitted. It was stated that the man preferred that his children should continue in the condition of slaves, and gave his property to a man who was to be their master. He gave as a reason for this that he had personally examined the condition of the free blacks in Philadelphia and Boston, as well as in Virginia, and he preferred that his children should remain slaves, knowing that their master would take better care of them than they were capable of exercising for themselves. This was substantially correct, and I have conversed with a gentleman who tried to persuade him to act otherwise, to whom he gave these reasons. He had been, however, for a



long time before his death, in a low state of health, and I know not how sound, or uninfluenced by others, his mind might have been. The circumstance omitted was, that these were illegitimate children, by a slave woman, although he had a wife that was a free woman, and had had a child by her—which, however, died young. It is a general custom of white people here to leave their illegitimate children, by slaves (and they are *very* common) in slavery. The man was himself a mulatto. I know of a very respectable and very wealthy man who sold his own half-brother to the traders to go South, because he attempted to run away.

I have heard of another case of a free negro in Virginia, supposed to be worth at least \$5,000.

At the present rate of wages, any free colored man can accumulate property more rapidly in Virginia than almost any man, depending solely on his labor, can at the North. In the tobacco factories in Richmond and Petersburg slaves are at this time in great demand, and are paid one hundred and fifty to two hundred dollars, and all expenses, for a year. These slaves are expected to work only to a certain extent for their employers; it having been found that they could not be “driven” to do a fair day’s work so easily as they could be stimulated to it by the offer of a bonus for all they would manufacture above a certain number of pounds. This quantity is so easily exceeded that the slaves earn for themselves from five to twenty dollars a month. *Freemen* are paid for all they do at rates which make their labor equally profitable, and *can* earn, if they give but moderate attention and diligence to the labor, very large sums. The barber under the Bollingbroke Hotel has a younger brother, who works in a tobacco factory, whose wages last year amounted to over nine hundred dollars. Of this he has laid up not one cent, and such is the case with nearly all the hands so employed in the town; they spend their wages as do the slaves their “over money,” almost as rapidly as they receive it, and as foolishly and as much to their own injury as do sailors, or the manufacturing workmen in England. Of the truth of this, I have assurances from every quarter, and from men of all opinions.

Formerly, I am told, the slaves were accustomed to recreate themselves in the evening and on holidays a great deal in dancing, and that they took great enjoyment in this exercise. It was at length, however, preached against, and the “professors” so

generally induced to use their influence against it as an immoral practice, that it has greatly gone "out of fashion," and in place of it the young ones have got into the habit of gambling, and worse occupations, for the pastime of their holidays and leisure hours. I have not seen any dancing during these holidays, nor any amusement engaged in by the blacks that was not essentially gross, dissipating or wasteful, unless I except firing of crackers.

Improvvidence is generally considered here a natural trait of African character; and by none is it more so than by the negroes themselves. I think it is a mistake. Negroes, as far as I have observed at the North, although suffering from the contamination of habits acquired by themselves or their fathers in Slavery, unless they are intemperate, are more provident than whites of equal educational advantages. Much more so than the newly-arrived Irish, though the Irish are soon infected with the desire of accumulating wealth and acquiring permanent means of comfort. This opinion is confirmed by the experience of the City Missionaries—one of whom has informed me that where the very poorest classes of New-York reside, black and white in the same house, the rooms occupied by the blacks are generally much less bare of furniture and the means of subsistence than those of the whites.

I observed that the negroes themselves follow the notion of the whites here, and look upon the people of their race as naturally unfitted to provide for themselves far ahead. Accustomed like children to have all their necessary wants provided for, their whole energies and powers of mind are habitually given to obtaining the means of temporary ease and enjoyment. Their masters and the poor or "mean" whites acquire somewhat of the same habits from early association with them, calculate on it in them, do not wish to cure it, and by constant practices encourage it. The negroes depend much for the means of enjoying themselves on presents. Their good-natured masters (and their masters are very good-natured, though capricious and quick-tempered) like to gratify them, and are ashamed to disappoint them—to be thought mean. So it follows that with the free negroes, habit is upon them; the habits of their associates, slaves, make the custom of society—that strongest of agents upon weak minds. The whites think improvvidence a natural defect of character with them, expect it of them as they



grow old, or as they lose easy means of gaining a livelihood, charitably furnish it to them; expect them to pilfer; do not look upon it as a crime; if they do, at least, consider them but slightly to blame, as, indeed, they are; and so every influence of association is unfavorable to providence, forethought, economy. I shall continue this subject in my next.

SLAVERY IN VIRGINIA: APRIL 1853

*The South*

LETTERS ON THE PRODUCTIONS, INDUSTRY AND  
RESOURCES OF THE SLAVE STATES

NUMBER NINE

*Condition of Free Blacks at the South—Free Blacks at the North—Evils of Enfranchisement—Aversion to Colonization—Dependence of Negroes on the Whites—General Sentiment on Slavery in Virginia.*

*To the Editor of the New-York Daily Times.*

With such influences upon them, with such a character, with such education, with such associations, as I described in my last letter, it is not surprising that Southerners say that the condition of the slave who is subject to some wholesome restraint, and notwithstanding his improvidence is *systematically* provided for, is preferable to that of the free black. The free black does not in general feel himself superior to the slave, and the slaves of the wealthy and aristocratic families consider themselves in a much better and more honorable position than the free blacks. I have heard their view of the matter expressed thus "\_\_\_\_\_ *dirty free niggers!—got no body to take care of 'em.*"

It is for this reason that slaves of gentlemen of high character, who are treated with judicious indulgence, and who can rely with confidence on the permanence of their position, knowing that they will be kindly cared for as they grow old, and feeling their own incapacity to take care of themselves, do often voluntarily remain in slavery when freedom is offered them,



whether it be at the South, or North, or in Africa. A great many slaves that have been freed and sent to the North, after remaining there for a time, have of their own accord, returned to Virginia, and their report of the manner in which negroes are treated there, the difficulty of earning enough to provide themselves with the luxuries to which they have been accustomed, the unkindness of the white people to them, and the want of that thoughtless liberality in payments to them which they expect here from their superiors, has not been such as to lead others to pine for the life of an outcast at the North. Among those so returning, have been many of Mr. Randolph's slaves, I understand.

And here let me say, as I am most happy to do, that I am convinced that the real kindness of heart and generosity of the people of Virginia, makes practically of no effect their unjust, cruel and cowardly laws with regard to free negroes—unjust, because they interfere with a man's quiet possession of the rewards of his own labor—cruel, because they separate friends, break up families, and make men homeless outcasts among strangers—cowardly, because they attempt to throw upon others a danger and evil which is the natural result of the peculiar constitution of their own society.

The spread of intelligence of all kinds among the slaves is remarkable. A planter told me that he had frequently known of his slaves going twenty miles from home and back during the night, without their being missed at all from work, or known at the time to be off the plantation. Another told me that he had been frequently informed by his slaves of occurrences in a town forty miles distant, where he spent part of the year with his family, in advance of the mail, or any means of communication that he could command the use of. Also, when in town, his servants would sometimes give him important news from the plantation, several hours before a messenger dispatched by his overseer arrived.

I do not wish to be understood as intimating that the slaves generally would not like to be freed and sent to the North, or that they are ever really contented or satisfied with slavery; only that as having been deprived of the use of their limbs from infancy, as it were, they are not such fools as to wish now suddenly to be set upon their feet, and left to shift for themselves.

They prefer, if they have sufficient worldly wisdom, to secure at least plain food and clothing, and comfortable lodging, at their owner's expense, while they will return as little for it as they can, and have only the luxuries of life to work for on their own account. It is not easy to deprive them of the means of securing a good share of these.

These luxuries to be sure, may be of very degrading character, and such as, according to our ideas, they would be better without. But their tastes and habits are formed to enjoy them, and they are not likely to be content without them.

But, to live either on their own means, or the charitable assistance of others, at the North, they must dispense with many of them. It is as much as most of them—more than some of them, with us—can do, by their labor, to obtain the means of subsistence, such as they have been used to being provided with, without a thought of their own, at the South. And if they are known to indulge in practices that are habitual with them, they will not only lose the charity, but even the custom, of most of their philanthropical friends; and then they must turn to pilfering again, or meet that most pitiful of all extremities—poverty from want of work. Again: Suppose them to wish to indulge in their old habits of sensual pleasure, they can only do so by forsaking the better class of even their own color, or by drawing them down to their own level. In this way, Slavery, even now, day by day, is greatly responsible for the degraded and immoral condition of the free blacks of our cities, and especially of Philadelphia. It is, perhaps, necessary that I should explain that licentiousness and almost indiscriminate sexual connection among the young is very general, and is a necessity of the system of Slavery. A Northern family that employs slave domestics, and insists upon a life of physical chastity in its female servants, is always greatly detested; and they frequently come to their owners and beg to be taken away, or not hired again, though acknowledging themselves to be kindly treated in all other respects. A slave owner told me this of his own girls hired to Northern people.

That the character and condition of some is improved by coming to the North, it is impossible to deny. From a miserable half barbarous, half brutal state they have been brought to the highest civilization. From slaves they have sometimes come to



be intelligent, cultivated, free-thinking, independent-minded, and good and even great men. Frederick Douglass is a *great* man, if poetry, eloquence and vigorous original thought make greatness. He is but little less great that the vindictive energy with which he pursues the enemy that prevents his being recognized as so, that even *taboos* him from the society of the cultivated and refined, sometimes carries him beyond the bounds of calm reason and good taste.

It is minds of such character originally that slavery is most galling to, and in which the intelligence and energy necessary to obtain freedom is most likely to reside. For this reason the condition and character of the fugitive slaves does not give a fair indication of that of the mass, and yet it surely is not such, take them all in all, as to make it appear that if the great body of slaves should be sent to free States they would be better off than they are now. I doubt if we have reason to think their children would. In my opinion, this is the greatest reproach to slavery, but the fact remains against *hasty* measures to destroy it.

As to slaves set free by the masters, without any previous education for it and sent to the free States, I have no doubt they often come to great suffering; and if it should be a frequent or general practice, the result would be anything but desirable. I know of one case in which seven were thus permitted to go to Philadelphia, of which five died in three years, two returned to Virginia, and only one remains—of whose condition I am uninformed, but have no reason to think, and do not believe it at all better in any way than when he was a slave.

As to Liberia, it is certainly true that the negroes, either slave or free, are not generally disposed to go there. It is a distant country, of which they can have but very little reliable information, they do not like the idea any more than other people do of emigrating from their native country. But I really think that the best reason for their not being more anxious to go there is that they are sincerely attached in a certain way to the *white race*. At all events they do not incline to live in communities entirely separate from the whites and do not long for entire independence from them. They have been so long accustomed to trusting the government of all weighty matters to the whites, that they would not feel at home where they did not have them to "take care of them." As I pointed out before, they do not feel

inclined to take great responsibilities on themselves, and have no confidence in the talent of their race for self-government. A gentleman told me that he owned a very intelligent negro who had acquired some property, and that he had more than once offered him his freedom, but he would always reply that he did not feel able to fall entirely upon his own resources, and preferred to have a master. He once offered him his freedom to go to Liberia, and urged him to go there. His reply was to the effect that he would have no objections if the Government was in the hands of white folks, but that he had no confidence in the ability of black people to undertake the control of public affairs.

To conclude this letter, I will tell you what I think the continued existence of Slavery in Virginia depends upon. First—

Upon the very low and degraded condition of the mass of the people. The proportion of those who cannot read and write in the State is *more than thirty times as great as in Connecticut*. From their want of intelligence they are duped, frightened, excited, prejudiced and made to betray their most direct and evident interests by the more cultivated and talented, spendthrift and unprincipled of the wealthy class. These, who, without the slightest prudence or care for the future of the Commonwealth, live dependent for the means of their selfish extravagance on the slave labor of today, form "public opinion" by their reckless energy.

Meanwhile the truly wise and good men of the State suffer themselves to be left in the background, suffer themselves to appear in a false position, even aid by their apparent countenance of the wicked and foolish, the general expression of attachment to Slavery, because the question, What can be done, is too great for them, and because they really think the only remedy that is proposed would be productive of greater evil than the disease.

No one speaks a word aloud of it, but not a sober, thinking man of the State is there that does not know that Slavery is a Curse upon him and his, and that if it were possible to remove the effect of causes that are not alone in the future or the present, Virginia would be a hundred times richer, a thousand times happier, if Slavery were not.

P. S.—Since I wrote this letter I have been convinced that the sentiment I have described in the last paragraph is even deeper and more general with the mass of the people than I

then imagined. I must mention an incident indicative of it. I was standing on the platform of a railroad car at a station where a gang of slaves had been waiting to take our train to proceed South, but the "servant's car" being full they were left behind. Two men, one of whom I afterwards learned to be a bar-keeper, the other an overseer, stood with me on the platform. As we moved off one said to the other:

"That's a good lot of niggers."

"Good! I only wish they belonged to me, I wouldn't ask for anything else."

They continued in conversation, *starting* with this, for some time, though I heard but little of what they said. They were talking of their different occupations, and grumbling that they succeeded no better. One, I heard say, that the highest wages he had ever had was two hundred dollars a year, and that year he did not lay up a cent. Soon after, one of them spoke with much vehemence and bitterness of tone, so I do not doubt their whole previous conversation had had reference to the point.

"I wish to God, old Virginny was free of all the niggers!"

"It would be a d\_\_\_\_d good thing if she was."

"Yes, and I tell you, it would be a—d\_\_\_\_d *good thing for us poor fellows.*"

"Well, I reckon it would, myself."

But, mind you, these same "poor fellows" understand the impracticability of instantly abolishing Slavery and having on their hands a vast population of freed slaves—more degraded and impressible with exciting prejudices than even themselves—as well as any body, and would be the very first to tar and feather an "Abolitionist" if he came to advise them to it.



"THE LAWS OF THE SOUTH": JULY 1853

*The South*

LETTERS ON THE PRODUCTIONS, INDUSTRY AND  
RESOURCES OF THE SOUTHERN STATES

NUMBER TWENTY-EIGHT

*Slaves Owning Horses, Guns, and Dogs—The New Code of Alabama—Illicit Trade with Negroes—Pilfering—The Socialistic Aspect of Slavery—The Paternal Aspect of Slavery.*

In returning from the "Cracker meeting" to the plantation, we passed a man on horseback, who had the appearance of one of the civilized native East Indian gentlemen; his complexion dark olive, with good features, and a thick moustache. He was well-dressed, and raised his hat in bowing to us with a courteous and well-bred air. I asked who it was.

"He is one of our people—Robert—a very valuable servant. He is the watchman, and has charge of the engine and all the stores."

We met a wagon with a pleasant family party of common fieldhand negroes. They also belonged to Mr. A. I inquired if they usually let them have horses to go to Church.

"Oh, no; that horse belongs to the old man."

"Belongs to him! Why, do they own horses?"

"Oh, yes; William (the House servant) owns two, and Robert, I believe, has three now; that was one of them he was riding."

"How do they get them?"

"Oh, they buy them."

"But can they have money enough to buy horses?"

"Oh, yes; William makes a good deal of money; so does Robert. You see he is such a valuable fellow, father makes him a good many presents. He gave him a hundred dollars only a little while ago. The old man was getting infirm, and could not get about very well, so father gave him a horse."

I afterwards met the man, Robert, at the mill, where he lived

as "watchman," or steward, in a cabin by himself, at a distance from the quarters of the other negroes. His language and manner was confident, frank, and manly; contrasting as much as possible with that of the negroes or mulattoes of ordinary circumstances. He wore a belt, on which were hung a large number of keys, and he walked about with his owner and me, to open the doors of the mill, barns, storehouses, and stables, conversing freely, and explaining a variety of matters with much intelligence.

I learned that he was employed while a boy as a house-servant, until, at his own request, he was put in the plantation blacksmith's shop; after acquiring this craft, he learned to make cotton-gins, and then, as he wanted to become a machinist, his master took him to Savannah, where he remained living at his own pleasure for several years. At length his owner, finding that he was acquiring dissipated habits and wasting all his earnings, brought him back to his plantation, and by giving him duties flattering to his self-respect, and allowing him peculiar privileges, made him content to remain there. He had made all the alterations and repairs necessary in running a steam-engine and extensive machinery during seven years, and his work was admirable, both in contrivance and execution.

Elsewhere I saw another negro engineer of remarkable intelligence; the gentleman in whose employment he had been for many years, esteemed him very highly, and desired to make him free. His owner, a large capitalist, a gentleman moving in our best society, and a church-member, resides at the North. He does not think it a good plan to emancipate slaves, and refuses to sell him at even a great price for that purpose. He (the owner) receives two hundred dollars a year as the wages for his services.

Though in reality a slave, being himself the property of another, cannot possess property, yet in the same way that our children and minors have things "*for* their own," they acquire many articles which few masters would be mean enough to take from them, except they were of a character to hurt them—such as ardent spirits—or such as they might be afraid of their using to the injury or annoyance of others.

The new code of Alabama, which, in one or two particulars, is less inhumane than the laws of any other Southern State, except Louisiana, in its provisions with regard to the negroes, has



one article forbidding slaves to own dogs. As it seemed to me by the incessant yelping at night that every negro in the State must keep half a dozen curs, I asked a legal friend what was the object of the law. He could not tell me, but assured me that it would never be enforced. I presume it was intended to abate the great destruction of sheep by negroes' dogs (or rather the destruction which the negroes attribute to dogs, to shield a theft of one of themselves), an evil which is everywhere complained of at the South, and which operates to prevent more extensive wool-growing there. It will probably not be enforced except on extraordinary occasions.

Other provisions of this code, enumerated by a writer in the *Times* a few days since, as examples of the humane amelioration of the laws of the South in favor of the negroes, seem to me of value only as expressing the views of the enactors on certain minor moralities of Slavery, such as that forbidding the separation from their mothers (*mothers* only) of children, before they are ten years old, in sheriff's sales, unless their owner deems that his interests require it (for this is all it amounts to), and to prevent the separation of relatives in mortgagee's sales, where they can just as well be sold together in family lots. The gratification which "Walpole" finds in such provisions for the more humane use of negroes, in a State which he considers to be "rapidly advancing in all that constitutes true civilization," and as "leading the way" by such measures in a glorious work of reformation, well shows with how much smaller a progress than most Northern men would have been apt to suppose safe and practicable, even the most intelligent, liberal, humane, and hopeful Southerners would be content—bearing out the views I have before expressed upon this point.

I fear many of your readers will have been surprised to find such a man touching upon it as a great thing—a reformation to be pointed to as an honor to the civilization of the good people of Alabama—that the law does not violently separate, for the fault or indiscretion of another person (their owner, as it deems him), a child under five years of age from its mother, under any circumstances, nor remove a child under ten years old from its mother, unless the said owner will make and deliver to an officer in charge an affidavit that his (the said owner's) interests will be materially prejudiced by the sale of them together. The law



does not even propose to hinder, by so much as requiring an affidavit to be made that he will make money by it, the owner of a mother and child who pays his debts, from selling one to go to Texas, and retaining the other. This would be thought exceeding the appropriate duties of legislation—too great an interference with the natural laws of commerce.

I have often suggested the propriety of such laws as "Walpole" refers to, to prevent the internal slave trade, and have been answered that it was impossible to make such laws efficient. In Georgia, I was told, there is a law forbidding the introduction of slaves from abroad to be sold within the State; but it is constantly evaded. The law does not forbid persons without the State selling to those within, nor the transfer of slave property between resident citizens. The slave trader, therefore, has merely to have a partner, or confederate resident, execute bills of sale of his Virginia importation to him, and the latter may then resell without let or hindrance. I entirely agree with "Walpole" in his views of the principles on which Southern Statesmanship should be guided on this subject, and if I had the least ability to influence the South, I would not wish to use it in any other direction than that in which his enthusiasm flows.

If I err in my statement of facts, or if I have misapprehended public sentiment at the South, on this or any other subject, I shall consider it a favor to be corrected by those whose residence at the South gives them means of more reliable information and better judgment, than I can hope to have enjoyed. But I ask you, Southern readers, to remember, that a stranger to their habits and proceedings in connection with Slavery, must reflect from so different and distant a standpoint from that in which familiarity places them, that it will not be strange if what appears light to them, sometimes remains dark to him, and that a movement which to them is great and important, is to him almost imperceptible.

The watchman, Robert, besides owning three horses, had in his possession *three guns*—one of them a valuable fowling piece of a noted London make. Upon further inquiry, I found that several of the field hands also owned guns, which they kept in their cabins. Nothing could show better than this how small is the fear of insurrection where the negroes are managed discreetly, and treated with a moderate degree of confidence

and kindness. I have not examined the laws of the State upon the subject, but it was probably illegal, as I know it would be in Alabama and Louisiana for them to be possessed of these weapons. The negroes had purchased them or, in some cases, received them as presents from their owner.

On inquiring of him what were their privileges in buying and selling, he informed me that during a large part of the year all the industrious hands finish the regular tasks required of them by one or two o'clock in the afternoon, and during the remainder of the day are at liberty, if they choose, to labor for themselves. Each family has a half-acre of land allotted to it, for a garden, besides which there is a large vegetable garden, cultivated by a gardener for the plantation, from which they are supplied, to a greater or lesser extent. They are at liberty to sell whatever they choose from the products of their own garden, and to make what they can by keeping swine and fowls. His family had no other supply of poultry and eggs, except what was obtained by purchase from his own negroes; they frequently, also purchase game from them.

The only restriction upon their traffic was a "liquor law." They were not allowed to buy or sell ardent spirits. This prohibition, like liquor laws elsewhere, unfortunately could not be enforced, and of late years, Irishmen moving into the country and opening small shops, buying stolen goods from the negroes, and selling them poisonous washes under the name of grog, had become a very great evil; and the planters, although it was illegal, were not able to prevent it. They had combined to do so, and had brought several offenders to trial; but as it was a penitentiary offence, the culprit would spare no pains or expense to save himself from it, and it was almost impossible, in a community constituted as theirs was, to find a jury that would convict.

A remarkable illustration of this evil had just occurred. A planter, discovering that a considerable quantity of cotton had been stolen from him, and suspecting one of his negroes to have taken it, from finding him drunk and very sick from the effects of liquor soon after, informed the patrol of the neighboring planters of it. A lot of cotton was prepared by mixing hair with it, and put in a tempting place. The negro was seen to take it, and was followed to a grog-shop, several miles distant, where he sold it, its real value being nearly ten dollars, for ten cents,



taking his pay in liquor. The man was arrested, and the theft being made to appear, by the hair, before a justice, obtained bail in \$2,000 to answer at the higher Court.

In a community where the greater number of families live miles apart, and have but rare intercourse with one another, where occasion for Law and Government is almost unknown, where one part of the people, poor, untrained, illiterate, recklessly and improvidently live almost from day to day on the bounty of Nature, making rude log huts, every man for himself; of restless disposition, and frequently, from mere caprice, leaving them and moving away to make new homes; habitually a law to themselves, while they are accustomed, from childhood, to the use of the most certain deadly weapon; and where, in the other part of the people, a barbarous, patriarchal system of government exists, within another Government—as far as possible, with this circumstance, of the most republican and enlightened form—it is really wonderful that Law has so much power, and its deliberate movements and provisions for justice to accused parties are so much respected, as, spite of calumny and occasional exceptions, is usually the case in our Slave States. Why are not these villainous scamps scourged out of the district, and their dens burned, where the Law is so slow and uncertain with them?

This evil of the grog shops, and other illicit and criminal business with negroes, is a great and increasing one at the South. Everywhere that I have been, I have found the planters provoked and angry about it. A great swarm of Jews, within the last ten years, has settled in nearly every Southern town, many of them men of no character, opening cheap clothing and trinket shops, ruining or driving out of business many of the old retailers, and engaging in a clandestine trade with the simple negroes, which is found very profitable. The law which prevents the reception of the evidence of a negro in Courts, here strikes back with a most annoying force upon the dominant power itself. In the mischief thus arising, we see a striking illustration of the danger which stands before the South, whenever its prosperity shall invite extensive immigration, and lead what would otherwise be a healthy competition to flow through its channels of industry.

Mr. A. remarked that his arrangements allowed his servants



no excuse for dealing with these fellows. He made it a rule to purchase everything they had to sell, and to give them a high price for it himself. Eggs constituted a circulating medium on the plantation; their par value was considered to be twelve for a dime, at which they would be exchanged for cash or taken on deposit at his kitchen.

Whatever he took of them that he could not use in his own family, or had not occasion to give to others of his servants, was sent to town to be resold. The negroes would not commonly take money for the articles he had of them, but would have the value of them put to their credit, and a regular account was kept with them. He had a store, well supplied with articles that they most wanted, which were purchased in large quantities and sold to them at wholesale prices; thus giving them a great advantage in dealing with him rather than with the grog shops. His slaves were sometimes his creditors to large amounts; at the present time he owed them about five hundred dollars. A woman had charge of the store, and when there was anything called for that she could not supply, it was usually ordered by the next conveyance of his factors in town.

Here you see an illustration of what, I believe, I have before suggested: Slavery is a grand, practical, working system of *Socialism*. It brings up, too, another aspect of Slavery—its happiest and best.

The negroes came to us from barbarism as from a cradle, with a confused, half-developed mind, with strong and simple appetites and impulses, but whimsical and unreliable; forming attachments quickly, and cleaving closely to their protectors and superiors; but, if removed from one, forming the same relations quickly, and with equal strength, with another; subject to violent and uncontrollable passions, and altogether undisciplined, uneducated, unchristianized.

Here I see their master, dealing with them as a father might with such children; guarding them sedulously against dangerous temptations, forbidding them to indulge in bad practices, rewarding the diligent and obedient, and chastising the perverse and indolent; anticipating and providing for their wants; encouraging them in the provident use of their little means of amusement, and comfort, and luxury; all the time furnishing them the necessary support of life; caring diligently for them

in sickness; and only when they are of good age and strength, so long as he is their guardian, demanding of them a certain amount of their labor and assistance, to increase his own comforts, provide for his age.

Were but all Slavery this, and were but this all of Slavery!

succeed by its merit, by its talent. A cross between the Westminster Review & the Tribune, is my idea. Weekly, I think, to give it variety & scope enough for this great country & this cursedly little people. Keep it before you.

Yours affectionately,

Fred.

SLAVES & NON-SLAVEHOLDING WHITES: JANUARY 1854

### *The South*

LETTERS ON THE PRODUCTIONS, INDUSTRY AND  
RESOURCES OF THE SOUTHERN STATES

NUMBER FORTY-SEVEN

*General Conclusions—The Condition of the Slaves—The Condition of the Non-Slaveholding Whites.*

Southerners often represent the condition of their slaves to be so happy and desirable that we might wonder that they do not sometimes take measures to be made slaves themselves, or at least occasionally offer their children for sale to the highest bidder. Yet there are many among us who always assume these accounts to be the only reliable information that we have upon the subject. On the other hand, there are many who always picture the slave as a martyr, with his hands folded in supplication, naked, faint with hunger, dragging a chain, and constantly driven to extremity of human exertion by a monster flourishing a cart-whip.

A Scotchman, who had been employed at home as foreman of a large stock farm, came, a year or two since, to America, to better his condition. He spent some months in Canada and afterwards in New-England, looking in vain for a situation suited to his capabilities and habits. His little capital being nearly expended, he used what remained in paying his passage to Richmond, Va., learning that the proprietors of farms in the Slave States generally employed overseers, as in Scotland. On arriving at Richmond he immediately walked into the country,



and at nightfall came to the plantation of the gentleman who related his story to me. He informed the proprietor of his circumstances and solicited employment, presenting, at the same time, a recommendation from his last employer in Scotland, and a testimonial of his piety, good character and education from the pastor of the church he had belonged to in the old country. Before, however, the gentleman had read these, he said to him, "By the way, Sir, there are a number of your niggers loose in the lane."

"What?"

"As I was coming up the lane to the house, Sir, I met a number of niggers just going off loose, without anybody to look after them."

"Yes, I suppose they have got through their work, and are going to their quarters."

"But they were *loose*, Sir; just straying off, nobody looking after them. If you wish, Sir, I'll run down and catch them."

The Scotchman had always been informed, as he afterwards told the gentleman, that the slaves were treated exactly like cattle, and probably would not have been much surprised if he had been ordered to put half a dozen of them into stalls to be fattened for the butcher.

I think that any one who has read the accounts I have given of the negroes upon the different plantations I have visited, and the chance-observations I have made on others, will have obtained a correct and reliable idea of the *customary* manner in which the slaves are treated by the whites. It may be desired of me, however, to give the conclusions at which I have arrived upon certain points which have been most fruitful of unprofitable controversy.

*Are the slaves hard-worked, poorly fed, miserably lodged and clothed, and subject to frequent brutal punishment?*

Any sensible man, at all familiar with the Black-laws of the Southern States, can anticipate the true answer to these questions from his general knowledge of human nature. There is all the difference in the treatment of slaves by different masters that there is of horses by their riders, or of children by their parents. The laws have very little power to restrain cruelty or to enforce care and provide adequate sustenance for the negroes. They have less effect than the laws to secure humane treatment

of animals at the North, because the violations of the laws at the South would be much more seldom witnessed by persons anxious to secure their enforcement, and because Southerners respect the individuality of each other more than Northerners, and are more loth to meddle in matters that do not *especially* concern themselves. Public Opinion is favorable to humanity and care—in some districts very strongly and effectually so. In general its influence is not very valuable to the negro, for the same reasons that the laws are not. What power has Public Opinion on the treatment of domestics and farm laborers at the North? Except in extreme cases, none. Competition is the balance wheel of cupidity.

But as I have said, in describing the character of the people of the South, they are as kind to their slaves as any people could be imagined to be—much more kind than one whose whole experience of human nature had been obtained at the Northern States would be likely to imagine them to be.

If the labor of the slaves were voluntary—if he were exhilarated with the spirit of the ambitious free laborer, with a loved wife and children to enjoy the fruits of his toil in proportion to its amount, his work would in nearly every case, as far as I could judge, be light. As it is, on the far Southern large plantations especially, it seemed to me that the negro was *driven* at his work more tediously and fatiguingly than agricultural laborers often are in any other part of the world that I have visited.

The negroes, I should think, were *generally abundantly* provided with coarse food—more so than the agricultural laborers of any part of Europe.

They are sufficiently clothed, *in general*, to enable them, if they are at all pains-taking, which they seldom are in this particular, to appear decently, and to protect them from any degree of cold weather to which in the mild climate of the South they are subject. Their habitations are *generally* very deficient in comfort, and are much too small for the number of occupants that are crowded into them. Rapid improvement in this respect, however, is now making; neat (exteriorly) quarters for the negroes having become a fashionable part of every gentleman's plantation. The negroes seldom or never want for fuel.

There are but few plantations in which the negroes are not frequently punished by being whipped, and that not seldom with



what I should think would be generally considered at the North, severity. In this respect I think the condition of the negroes is just about what that of the seamen has formerly been in our Navy, and still is in the English service, varying on different plantations as in different ships. Cases of disgusting cruelty are not very rare. I never asked a middle aged Southerner the question (and I put it perhaps twenty times) who was not able to tell me a case within his own knowledge, and occurring, probably, in the near vicinity of his residence, of a slave killed by severe punishment from its master. I do not believe slaves are killed by their masters one tenth as often as sailors are by the cruelty or carelessness of their masters. I believe very few overseers punish their slaves entrusted to them so wantonly, brutally, passionately and cruelly as I have seen a clergyman in New-England punish boys entrusted to him for education. On some few plantations punishment of adult and well-broken negroes is very rare. But it requires a man of peculiar temperament and governing abilities, to efficiently control and direct a large body of persons, dependent on him and subject to his uncontrolled authority, whether they are negroes or sailors, or peasants or children, without the use of the lash or other humiliating punishments.

*Are the slaves "happy?"*

Any one who thinks that a drunkard can be made happy by supplying him to his full content with the only thing in the world that he craves, might answer this question as it generally is answered by Southern writers and their Northern disciples. And, in this sense, I believe it is true that the negro in Southern slavery is sufficiently degraded to be as happy on an average, as most men are in the world; as happy (in this sense) as the majority of the negroes who enjoy the freedom to live, if they can, in contempt and obloquy at the North.

*Are the slaves often separated against their will from their families?*

It is astonishing that any one can be so careless as to deny it. In every State of the South, except Florida, Missouri, Delaware, and in Texas, which I have not yet visited, I have known of slaves separated from their families without the slightest indication that it was not a frequent and almost an everyday occurrence. I can show evidence that would satisfy any court that it is a common practice in every Slave State. If any one says that



they have never known such a case in their own neighborhood, as our Southern friends often do, and, no doubt, believing that they speak truly, the chances are that if you ask them to let you look at the newspaper published nearest their residence, you will find an advertisement in it of slaves, in which some half dozen will be noted as the children of another, all to be sold singly and with no more restriction as to their future fate than if they were cattle, and at public auction. In a paper now before me there are nine mentioned as of one family, to be sold separately, but the suckling infants of two of them, and the child aged 3 years, and infant aged two months, of a girl aged 19, are to be sold with their mothers. Public opinion is opposed to the sale of old family servants, yet they not unfrequently are sold. I have several friends at the South who have each purchased more than one such, from mere humanity, to save them from being "sold away"—that is, from being separated from their wives and children. It is not a very common thing to sell a slave except "for fault," unless the owner has especial need of money. But this reason for selling a servant will be held over him as a threat, at every trifling occasion for blaming him. It is not common in most communities to sell a single slave, particularly if he is married, without mentioning the intention to do so, to him some time previously, and giving him leave to look about to find some person that he will like for a master, to purchase him. A price is often mentioned at which he is warned to sell himself, or after a certain time he will be sold to the traders. At almost every slave auction, however, the anxiety of the negroes to be purchased by some person living near their old master and their families, and their grief, if they are disappointed, is painfully evident.

The trade of a slave-dealer is about as reputable at the South as that of a horse jockey is at the North. They are generally considered knaves, and I think *therefore* are not admitted into the society of honorable gentlemen. To say that they are not so, merely because they buy and sell human flesh, is thoughtless, because there are very few of the honorable gentlemen of the South that have not themselves either bought or sold servants.

I have heard respectable planters speak of their friends as having borrowed money to speculate in negroes. "Negroes are the *consols* of the South," is a proverbial expression with

Southerners—certainly indicating the frequent and general transfer of this species of stock. Virginians who visit the North, often angrily deny that any one in that State makes a business of breeding negroes for market. Perhaps not, but I have heard men in Virginia speak publicly of purchasing women with reference to their breeding qualities, and of taking the most suitable care of them for this end. Men speak in railroad cars of “turning off” so many negroes every year, precisely as a Connecticut farmer speaks of “turning off” so many head of neat stock to the drovers every Spring.

A gentleman whom I visited in Mississippi, to show me that the condition of the negroes in that State was much more desirable than that of those in the Atlantic Slave States—after enumerating certain luxuries and privileges that were generally allowed them there, such as an allowance of molasses and better variety of food generally, a perquisite of money in proportion to the cotton sold, and permission to cultivate cotton, for sale themselves, on Saturday afternoons and holidays—added that the negroes were very much less frequently sold off the plantation and separated from their friends.

“A cotton planter here,” he said, “buys all the negroes his credit is good for, and keeps all he can get. Why, in Virginia, if a youngster wants to get a fine horse, or a young lady wants a piano, they tease their father to sell one of the young negroes to get the money for it; a negro is reckoned just the same as cash.” It is undeniable that the human life, sold and exported every year from Virginia, far exceeds in value that of the total of all other of its productions. It is always gratifying to find Virginians ashamed of this, as the cultivated gentlemen and the religious people generally are. The sale and purchase of men, women and children, regarding them so distinctly as property, and property entirely, is such an insult to the human race, that nothing else that disgraces the name of man more demands the shame and the indignant protest of all men who claim to be gentlemen of honor and chivalry.

*Are the negroes in Slavery improving and being christianized and becoming fitted gradually for freedom, as was anticipated and expected by the founders of the Republic, both of the North and South, at the time of the Revolution?*

Beyond a doubt, the men who signed the Declaration of



Independence, and who formed the Constitution of the United States (to judge from the expressions which the most prominent among them are recorded to have made), would be exceedingly disappointed with the present state of things. Not less so would be the men who composed various provincial Conventions in Virginia and North Carolina. Most disappointed would be Jefferson, who even at that early day pronounced in the gravest and most formal manner, in his history of Virginia, that Slavery was a great and dreadful curse upon his native State, the speedy end of which was to be demanded by every consideration of Justice, Humanity and Expediency.

The condition of the slaves is doubtless improving, and has greatly improved since the Revolution, in all the long settled parts of the country, in respect to the kindness with which they are treated. I mean that they are better fed, clothed and lodged, and are less subject to brutal punishment. The present tendency in the Cotton States to the enlargement of plantations, and to gathering negroes in larger bodies, I deem exceedingly unfavorable to their happiness.

The negroes are necessarily acquiring more of the outward forms and habits of civilization and Christianity every day, and many of those engaged in the domestic service of white households, and those living in towns, and the denser and more commercial communities, are growing intelligent, religious and moral. I must doubt if this is the case with the mass. I think they lose as much that is desirable of their original savage virtue from the influence of Slavery, as they gain in character from the influence of Christianity. Manliness, reliability, natural sense of and respect for that which is noble, self-respect and responsibility to conscience, and the natural affections, are all dissipated under the influence of Slavery, and are poorly compensated for by the mixture of formalism and irrational, idolatrous mysticisms, which generally passes with them for Christianity. I am aware that the opinion of most of the religious people of the South does not agree with that which I have been led to form. That of the majority of slaveholders and of all classes, however, so far as I could judge, does so.

There are very, very few Southerners who are not determinedly opposed to the indefinite improvement and elevation of the negroes. If this is doubted, ask any Southerner what is his



private opinion with regard to the destiny in the future of the Gulf States, and ten to one, if his answer is made freely and candidly, he will be obliged to admit that his view is incompatible with any great degree of intelligence on the part of the negroes. It is the general belief that in the great cotton, sugar and rice districts, Slavery will, and should, be indefinitely perpetuated. Ignorance and indolence of mind, and want of ambition, energy and intellectual capacity to struggle for freedom, are rightly considered necessary to Slavery.

*With regard to the instruction of Slaves*, it is well known that in the majority of the States it is forbidden by law to teach them to read and write. Nevertheless, with women and children, higher law notions seem to prevail, and it is not uncommon to find that some of the domestic servants of a family have been taught to read by their mistresses or white playfellows. To express my information as definitely as possible, I should roughly guess that one in five of all the household servants, and that one in one hundred of the field-hands on the plantations of the South, might be able to read haltingly. Half of this number might be able to write intelligibly to themselves. In certain Districts the proportion is much larger.

In this series of letters (which will be concluded with the next number) it has been a minor object with me to show the peculiarities of character and the habits of the Southerners, by describing what appeared to me remarkable in their manner of life and conversation. This class of my observations has been confined, in a great degree, to the less intelligent and cultivated people. It remains for me only to give my conclusions with regard to their condition in general.

It is estimated by a Southern writer, that five-sevenths of the whole white population of the South are non-slaveholders. Of course, this body has the political power to entirely control the destiny of the Slave States. Less information has, nevertheless, been usually given by travelers with regard to them, than the wealthy and hospitable proprietary—and their condition and character is nearly always entirely ignored by Southerners themselves in arguing the advantages of their slave system.

So far as they can be treated of as a class, the non-slaveholders are unambitious, indolent, degraded and illiterate—are a dead peasantry so far as they affect the industrial position of the

South. That they are illiterate, will not only have been evident to the readers of the Times, from observations I have given, but may be proved from official statistics. Notwithstanding the constant and immense influx of an uneducated pauper class from Europe into the Northern States, the proportion of those who cannot sign their names to marriage contracts and other legal papers, is much greater in every Slave State than in any Northern State—so far as the facts have been made known. I am writing in a steamboat, fast aground in the Cumberland River, and cannot refer to the authorities—but they are to be found in all good libraries, and are essentially accurate and reliable.

With regard to their moral condition, I have several times made inquiries of physicians—who almost alone of the educated class, have any valuable knowledge of them—and have invariably been informed that the number of illegitimate children among them was very great; and that many of those living together as man and wife, are never ceremonially married.

That they are non-producers, except of the necessities of their own existence, is evident from their miserable habitations and other indications of hopeless poverty. I have just been in conversation with a gentleman of Georgia (much the most enterprising of the Southern States) who is returning home after spending the Summer at the North. He observes with regard to the white laboring class: "Poor people in our country seem to care for nothing more than to just get a living. We cannot get them to work steady, even if we give them high wages. As soon as they have earned any money, they quit, and will not go to work again until they have spent it." Of course, as he says, there are some exceptions, but what is the exception at the South is the rule where labor in general is voluntary and not forced.

I have heretofore explained the reason of this—the degradation of all labor which is affected by Slavery. It was very concisely explained to me by a white working mechanic to-day—a foreigner, who had worked at the North, and lately moved to the South to obtain higher wages, but who was returning to the North again, dissatisfied. "Why, you see, Sir, no man will work along side of a nigger, if he can help it. It's too much like as if he was a slave himself."

The mode of life of the greater part of the non-slaveholders—the poor white people in the country—at the South, seems to



be much the same. Some of them are mere *squatters*, living by sufferance on the land of others; many own a small body of unproductive land, and in the Eastern Slave States especially, a large part of them occupy a few acres of forest land, which is let to them by the owner for a term of years, on condition that they clear it and perhaps otherwise improve it. They build a small cabin or shanty, of logs, upon the ground, in which to live, with the simplest housekeeping utensils. They raise swine in the forest, and generally own a horse or a pair of cattle, and perhaps a cow—all of the meanest description. They raise on their clearing a meagre crop of corn and a few potatoes, and this, with the game they shoot, furnishes them with food. The women spin and weave, and make most of their clothing. When the land reverts to the owner, they may continue to occupy it by paying him a share (usually one-third) of the corn they raise. They are very seldom observed at work, but are often seen, like young Rip Van Winkle, lounging at the door of a grocery, or sauntering, with a gun and a dog, in the woods.

I speak not less from what I have almost everywhere seen, than from accounts given me by planters of the non-slaveholding class of their own neighborhood, in almost every district I have visited. I may be wrong in supposing such to be the condition of the larger part of the class, when the farmers of the mountain regions and some frontier districts, where few slaves are owned, are included among them; but setting these aside, the condition of the majority of the remainder cannot be much, if any superior, to that indicated in my description.

I think I have had as good means of knowing, and of painfully appreciating the evils which arise from excessive competition, to the laborers of the North, as any man, and I cannot hesitate in affirming that there is no class in the Free States, with the exception of recent immigrants and victims of intemperance, whose condition is not far better than that of the non-slaveholding population of the South. I do not forget the occasional distress of factory hands and mechanics, crowded in large towns. I have been informed of similar distress reaching to an equally painful point in manufacturing towns of the South. The real difference seems to be that the Southern work-people, hoping for less, are less demonstrative of their suffering. The only apology that I can find for the assumption constantly made by almost



all Southern gentlemen and by Mrs. Tyler, that evils similar to those arising from over-competition are never found in Slave countries, is the fact of the very slight acquaintance they usually have with the vagabonds that surround them. I have hardly visited a single planter, however, who did not complain of the annoyance which the vagrant and dishonest habits of some of his poor neighbors gave him.

The unfortunate condition and character of these people, so far as they differ from those of the laboring class of the North, is mainly the direct effect of Slavery, and their material, moral and intellectual elevation will be commensurate with that of the negroes. Their ignorance and the vulgar prejudice and jealousy of low minds at present generally prevent their perception of this fact. They may, however, at some future time become a "dangerous class," as they now are a useful one to Southern legislators. Railroads, Manufactures and other enterprises, necessary to be encouraged for the prosperity of the South, will be of more value to them than would be even the gift of common schools. There is no life without intelligence—no intelligence without ambition.

"THE DUTY OF GOVERNMENT TO THESE NEGROES":  
MARCH 1862

*To Abraham Lincoln*

U.S. Sanitary Commission  
Adams House, 244 F. St.  
Washington, DC March 8th 1862

Dear Sir

At the request of several gentlemen—I mention D<sup>r</sup> Howe, Prof<sup>r</sup> Bache, D<sup>r</sup> Bellows and G W Curtis—I shall offer you my thoughts about the management of the negroes at Port Royal. That I can suppose it worthy of a moment of your time is to be accounted for simply by the fact that it chances to be more mature than most men's thoughts on this subject can be, the occasion which has arisen having been practically anticipated by me several years ago.

Aside from military considerations, the duty and function of government with regard to the negroes is included in and limited by these two propositions:

1. To save the lives of the negroes, except possibly as death may be a natural punishment of neglect of duty.
2. To *train* or *educate* them in a few simple, essential and fundamental social duties of free men in civilized life: as, first, to obtain each for himself the necessities of life, independently of charity; second, to regard family obligations; third, to substitute for subordination to the will of their former owners, submission to Laws—or rules of social comity with the understanding that these are designed to correspond to the natural laws of their happiness; 4th, to discriminate between just authority under the Laws as above, and despotic authority—between the duty of obedience to administrators of law and obedience to masters by might.

I do not know that there are any more than these: if there are, they should be clearly defined before they are sought to be inculcated by the use of the money or agents of government.

Whoever is entrusted with the administration of the duty of government to these negroes should be under no necessity or

temptation to engage in purely philanthropic, benevolent or charitable duties toward them.

If the two classes of duties (governmental and charitable) are not absolutely inconsistent one with another, the exercise of the latter by the same person with the former will do much to maintain a confusion of ideas which exists in the minds of the negroes and from which it is a large part of the duty of government as an economic operation to free them. It should be laid down as an absolute rule that government will do nothing merely for charity. The negroes are not to be in the least fed & clothed for charity but because either they are expected to be valuable to the state, and for that purpose their lives must be conserved, or because it is tacitly agreed upon between every civilized man and the community to which he attaches himself that in dire extremity of misfortune he shall not want protection against the coup de grace of cold & hunger. To accomplish these points, the agent of gov<sup>t</sup> should have the means within his control beyond all peradventure:

- 1 To place within the reach—upon proper conditions—of each negro, what is barely necessary for the support of his life. The limit of expenditure for this purpose should be strictly defined and the agent should be rigidly and accurately held within it, but within it there should be nothing left doubtful.

- 2 To offer employment and wages to each negro which will enable those who are diligent to provide something more than what is barely necessary for the support of life; which will, for instance, at least enable parents to provide for their children's necessity.

A very moderate sum to be attainable by each laborer daily will suffice for this; but the sum however large in the aggregate should be provided beyond any possibility of failure; otherwise the second proposition will fail and the unsuccessful attempts to realize it will accomplish results precisely the opposite to those required.

It would be better for the state, and more merciful to the negroes to guillotine them at once, than to educate them by any means in beggary, distrust of themselves and cowardly hatred of the first duties of freedom.

sgd. Fred. Law Olmsted



## "OPEN AIR GYMNASIUMS": APRIL 1890

*To Robert Treat Paine*

5th April, 1890

My dear Mr. Paine:—

I have just received your note of the 4th instant.

As I may not be able to attend the meeting to which you invite me, I wish to express the interest that I have long had in the subject to be considered.

You are aware that five years ago, I had a map and table prepared, showing the location, area and other particulars, of nearly two hundred parcels of public land in Boston and its immediate suburbs, many of these being, it is understood, lands which have come into the possession of the City under some legal process, wholly unimproved, and, in their present condition, useless. With regard to them, I urged at the time that "many are well situated for play grounds for school children, and could be adapted to that use at moderate expense; while others, smaller, even single house lots, would be available for open air gymnasiums." This statement was laid by the Park Commissioners before the City Council and widely published, and I have, on various occasions since, drawn the attention of the Mayor, Park Commissioners, School Committee and others to the matter.

I hope that special consideration may be given to the question of the desirability of open air gymnasiums expressly for the physical training of *school children*. The Charlesbank Gymnasium is designed for the benefit more particularly of working men of sedentary occupations, and ordinarily, under the rules of the Park Commission, school children are not admitted to use the apparatus with which it is furnished. But, by special arrangement, the School Committee last year had squads of boys sent to it from certain schools, at regular intervals, for several weeks, and an experiment was made in training these boys under a competent instructor. I do not know that a report of the result has been published, but I was personally informed, both by the instructor and by the president of the School Committee, that it was most promising. If so, should not the question be well

considered whether suitable provision for such training, both for boys and girls, might not be made at several points in the City, at convenient distance from the school houses, as a part of its regular educational system? I am under the impression that the space required at each point would be small, that suitable ground could be selected from public properties that are now useless, and that the apparatus needed would not be very costly. If nothing more is done immediately, might it not be well, before any of these pieces of land are otherwise disposed of, to have certain of the more suitable of them selected and an assignment of these secured for the purpose?

The Park Commissioners are intending this Summer to prepare a small, open-air gymnasium for women and girls under a plan that has been approved by Dr. Sargent, and if this should be found to work well, it is probable that it will be the forerunner of others.

I am, dear Mr Paine,  
Yours Very Truly

Fred<sup>k</sup> Law Olmsted

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