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M^{lle} Charles Smith
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M^{lle} Charles Smith

A WISH.

LET me not die for ever! when I'm laid
In the cold earth; but let my memory
Live still among ye, like the evening shade,
That o'er the sinking day steals placidly.
Let me not be forgotten! though the knell
Has tolled for me its solemn lullaby;
Let me not be forgotten! though I dwell
For ever now in death's obscurity.
Yet oh! upon the emblazoned leaf of fame,
Trace not a record, not a line for me,
But let the lips I loved oft breathe my name,
And in your hearts enshrine my memory!

F.A.K.

JOURNAL
OF
A RESIDENCE ON A
GEORGIAN PLANTATION
IN 1838—1839.

BY FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE.

SLAVERY THE CHIEF CORNER STONE.

'This stone (Slavery), which was rejected by the first builders, is become the chief stone of the corner in our new edifice.'—*Speech of ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS, Vice-President of the Confederate States: delivered March 21, 1861.*

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1863.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year one thousand
eight hundred and sixty-three, by

FRANCIS G. SHAW,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the Southern District
of New York

TO

ELIZABETH DWIGHT SEDGWICK,

THIS JOURNAL,

ORIGINALLY KEPT FOR HER,

IS

MOST AFFECTIONATELY

Dedicated.

P R E F A C E .

THE following diary was kept in the winter and spring of 1838-9, on an estate consisting of rice and cotton plantations, in the islands at the entrance of the Altamaha, on the coast of Georgia.

The slaves in whom I then had an unfortunate interest were sold some years ago. The islands themselves are at present in the power of the Northern troops. The record contained in the following pages is a picture of conditions of human existence which I hope and believe have passed away.

LONDON, *January* 16, 1863.



Vol. I.

Butler's

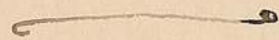
Island.



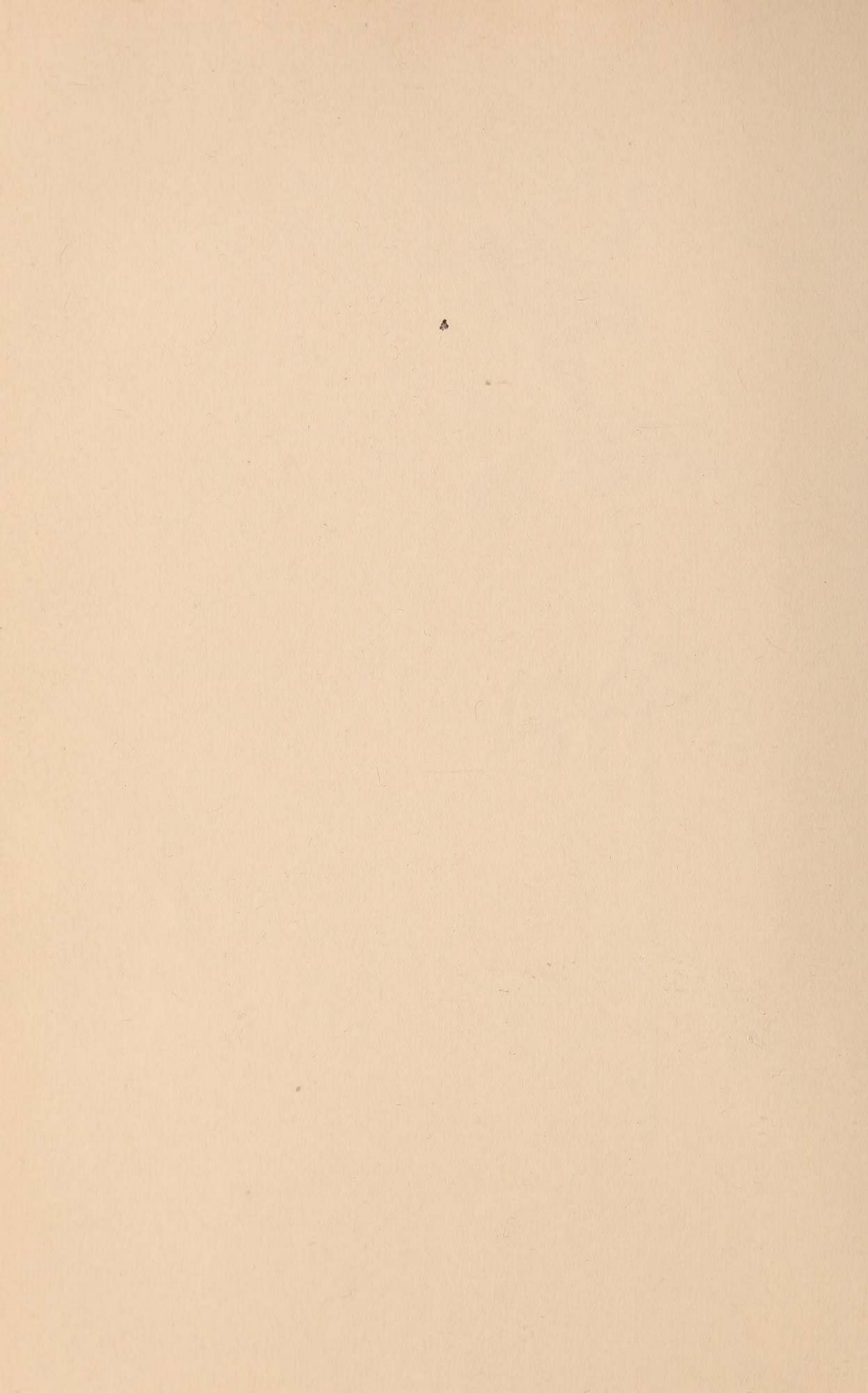
Water-Colors

by

Amelia M. Watson.



1916



MAIN LAND.
GEORGIA,

SAPELO
ID.
LIGHT.

DARIEN

BUTLERS
ID.

The
CUT

DELTA OF THE
ALTA MAHA RIVER.

LITTLE ST. SIMONS ID.

HAMPTON
POINT.

ST. ANNIE'S

JONES
CREEK.

ST. COOPER'S.

MAIN LAND.
GEORGIA.

FREDERICA

ST. SIMONS ISLAND.

FREDERICA RIVER.

HAMILTON.

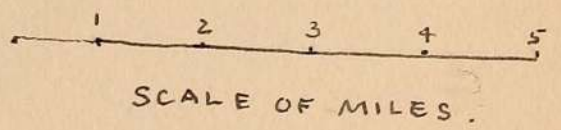
ATLANTIC OCEAN.

LIGHTHOUSE

BRUNSWICK.

ST. SIMONS SOUND.

JEKYL
ID.





JOURNAL.

Philadelphia, December, 1838.

MY DEAR E——,—I return you Mr. ——'s letter. I do not think it answers any of the questions debated in our last conversation at all satisfactorily: the *right* one man has to enslave another, he has not the hardihood to assert; but in the reasons he adduces to defend that act of injustice, the contradictory statements he makes appear to me to refute each other. He says, that to the Continental European protesting against the abstract iniquity of slavery, his answer would be, "The slaves are infinitely better off than half the Continental peasantry." To the Englishman, "They are happy compared with the miserable Irish." But supposing that this answered the question of original injustice, which it does not, it is not a true reply. Though the negroes are fed, clothed, and housed, and though the Irish peasant is starved, naked, and roofless, the bare name of freemen—the lordship over his own person, the power to choose and will—are blessings beyond food, raiment, or shelter; possessing which, the want of every comfort of life is yet more tolerable than their fullest enjoyment without them. Ask the thousands of ragged destitutes who yearly land upon these shores to seek the means of existence—ask the friendless, penniless foreign emigrant if he will give up his present misery, his future uncertainty, his doubtful and difficult struggle for life at once, for the secure, and, as it is called, fortunate dependence of the slave: the indignation with which he

would spurn the offer will prove that he possesses one good beyond all others, and that his birthright as a man is more precious to him yet than the mess of pottage for which he is told to exchange it because he is starving.

Of course the reverse alternative can not be offered to the slaves, for at the very word the riches of those who own them would make themselves wings and flee away. But I do not admit the comparison between your slaves and even the lowest class of European free laborers, for the former are *allowed* the exercise of no faculties but those which they enjoy in common with the brutes that perish. The just comparison is between the slaves and the useful animals to whose level your laws reduce them; and I will acknowledge that the slaves of a kind owner may be as well cared for, and as happy, as the dogs and horses of a merciful master; but the latter condition—*i. e.*, that of happiness—must again depend upon the complete perfection of their moral and mental degradation. Mr. —, in his letter, maintains that they *are* an inferior race, and, compared with the whites, “*animals*, incapable of mental culture and moral improvement:” to this I can only reply, that if they are incapable of profiting by instruction, I do not see the necessity for laws inflicting heavy penalties on those who offer it to them. If they really are brutish, witless, dull, and devoid of capacity for progress, where lies the *danger* which is constantly insisted upon of offering them that of which they are incapable. We have no laws forbidding us to teach our dogs and horses as much as they can comprehend; nobody is fined or imprisoned for reasoning upon knowledge and liberty to the beasts of the field, for they are incapable of such truths. But these themes are forbidden to slaves, not because they can not, but because they can and would seize on them with avidity—receive them gladly, comprehend them quickly; and the masters’ power over them

would be annihilated at once and forever. But I have more frequently heard not that they were incapable of receiving instruction, but something much nearer the truth—that knowledge only makes them miserable: the moment they are in any degree enlightened, they become unhappy. In the letter I return to you Mr. — says that the very slightest amount of education, merely teaching them to read, “impairs their value as slaves, for it instantly destroys their contentedness, and, since you do not contemplate changing their condition, it is surely doing them an ill service to destroy their acquiescence in it;” but this is a very different ground of argument from the other. The discontent they evince upon the mere dawn of an advance in intelligence proves not only that they can acquire, but combine ideas, a process to which it is very difficult to assign a limit; and there indeed the whole question lies, and there and nowhere else the shoe really pinches. A slave is ignorant; he eats, drinks, sleeps, labors, and is happy. He learns to read; he feels, thinks, reflects, and becomes miserable. He discovers himself to be one of a debased and degraded race, deprived of the elementary rights which God has granted to all men alike; every action is controlled, every word noted; he may not stir beyond his appointed bounds, to the right hand or to the left, at his own will, but at the will of another he may be sent miles and miles of weary journeying—tethered, yoked, collared, and fettered—away from whatever he may know as home, severed from all those ties of blood and affection which he alone of all human, of all living creatures on the face of the earth, may neither enjoy in peace nor defend when they are outraged. If he is well treated, if his master be tolerably humane or even understand his own interest tolerably, this is probably *all* he may have to endure: it is only to the consciousness of these evils that knowledge and reflection awaken him. But how is it if

his master be severe, harsh, cruel—or even only careless—leaving his creatures to the delegated dominion of some overseer or agent, whose love of power, or other evil dispositions, are checked by no considerations of personal interest? Imagination shrinks from the possible result of such a state of things; nor must you, or Mr. —, tell me that the horrors thus suggested exist only in imagination. The Southern newspapers, with their advertisements of negro sales and personal descriptions of fugitive slaves, supply details of misery that it would be difficult for imagination to exceed. Scorn, derision, insult, menace—the handcuff, the lash—the tearing away of children from parents, of husbands from wives—the weary trudging in droves along the common highways, the labor of body, the despair of mind, the sickness of heart—these are the realities which belong to the system, and form the rule, rather than the exception, in the slave's experience. And this system exists here in this country of yours, which boasts itself the asylum of the oppressed, the home of freedom, the one place in all the world where all men may find enfranchisement from all thraldoms of mind, soul, or body—the land elect of liberty.

Mr. — lays great stress, as a proof of the natural inferiority of the blacks, on the little comparative progress they have made in those states where they enjoy their freedom, and the fact that, whatever quickness of parts they may exhibit while very young, on attaining maturity they invariably sink again into inferiority, or at least mediocrity, and indolence. But surely there are other causes to account for this besides natural deficiency, which must, I think, be obvious to any unprejudiced person observing the condition of the free blacks in your Northern communities. If, in the early portion of their life, they escape the contempt and derision of their white associates—if the blessed unconsciousness and ignorance of childhood

keeps them for a few years unaware of the conventional proscription under which their whole race is placed (and it is difficult to walk your streets, and mark the tone of insolent superiority assumed by even the gutter-urchins over their dusky contemporaries, and imagine this possible)—as soon as they acquire the first rudiments of knowledge, as soon as they begin to grow up and pass from infancy to youth, as soon as they cast the first observing glance upon the world by which they are surrounded, and the society of which they are members, they must become conscious that they are marked as the Hebrew lepers of old, and are condemned to sit, like those unfortunates, without the gates of every human and social sympathy. From their own sable color, a pall falls over the whole of God's universe to them, and they find themselves stamped with a badge of infamy of Nature's own devising, at sight of which all natural kindness of man to man seems to recoil from them. They are not slaves indeed, but they are pariahs; debarred from all fellowship save with their own despised race—scorned by the lowest white ruffian in your streets, not tolerated as companions even by the foreign menials in your kitchen. They are free certainly, but they are also degraded, rejected, the offscum and the offscouring of the very dregs of your society; they are free from the chain, the whip, the enforced task and unpaid toil of slavery; but they are not the less under a ban. Their kinship with slaves forever bars them from a full share of the freeman's inheritance of equal rights, and equal consideration and respect. All hands are extended to thrust them out, all fingers point at their dusky skin, all tongues—the most vulgar, as well as the self-styled most refined—have learned to turn the very name of their race into an insult and a reproach. How, in the name of all that is natural, probable, possible, should the spirit and energy of any human creature support itself under such

an accumulation of injustice and obloquy? Where shall any mass of men be found with power of character and mind sufficient to bear up against such a weight of prejudice? Why, if one individual rarely gifted by heaven were to raise himself out of such a slough of despond, he would be a miracle; and what would be his reward? Would he be admitted to an equal share in your political rights? would he ever be allowed to cross the threshold of your doors? would any of you give your daughter to his son, or your son to his daughter? would you, in any one particular, admit him to the footing of equality which any man with a white skin would claim, whose ability and worth had so raised him from the lower degrees of the social scale? You would turn from such propositions with abhorrence, and the servants in your kitchen and stable—the ignorant and boorish refuse of foreign populations, in whose countries no such prejudice exists, imbibing it with the very air they breathe here—would shrink from eating at the same table with such a man, or holding out the hand of common fellowship to him. Under the species of social proscription in which the blacks in your Northern cities exist, if they preserved energy of mind, enterprise of spirit, or any of the best attributes and powers of free men, they would prove themselves, instead of the lowest and least of human races, the highest and first, not only of all that do exist, but of all that ever have existed; for they alone would seek and cultivate knowledge, goodness, truth, science, art, refinement, and all improvement, purely for the sake of their own excellence, and without one of those incentives of honor, power, and fortune, which are found to be the chief, too often the only, inducements which lead white men to the pursuit of the same objects.

You know very well, dear E——, that in speaking of the free blacks of the North I here state nothing but what is true, and of daily experience. Only last week I heard

in this very town of Philadelphia of a family of strict probity and honor, highly principled, intelligent, well-educated, and accomplished, and (to speak in the world's language) respectable in every way—i. e., *rich*. Upon an English lady's stating it to be her intention to visit these persons when she came to Philadelphia, she was told that if she did nobody else would visit *her*; and she probably would excite a malevolent feeling, which might find vent in some violent demonstration against this family. All that I have now said of course bears only upon the condition of the free colored population of the North, with which I am familiar enough to speak confidently of it. As for the slaves, and their capacity for progress, I can say nothing, for I have never been among them to judge what faculties their unhappy social position leaves to them unimpaired. But it seems to me that no experiment on a sufficiently large scale can have been tried for a sufficient length of time to determine the question of their incurable inferiority. Physiologists say that three successive generations appear to be necessary to produce an effectual change of constitution (bodily and mental), be it for health or disease. There are positive physical defects which produce positive mental ones; the diseases of the muscular and nervous systems descend from father to son. Upon the agency of one corporal power how much that is not corporal depends; from generation to generation internal disease and external deformity, vices, virtues, talents, and deficiencies are transmitted, and by the action of the same law it must be long indeed before the offspring of slaves—creatures begotten of a race debased and degraded to the lowest degree, themselves born in slavery, and whose progenitors have eaten the bread and drawn the breath of slavery for years—can be measured, with any show of justice, by even the least favored descendants of European nations, whose qualities have been for centuries devel-

oping themselves under the beneficent influences of freedom, and the progress it inspires.

I am rather surprised at the outbreak of violent disgust which Mr. ——— indulges in on the subject of amalgamation, as that formed no part of our discussion, and seems to me a curious subject for abstract argument. I should think the intermarrying between blacks and whites a matter to be as little insisted upon if repugnant, as prevented if agreeable to the majority of the two races. At the same time, I can not help being astonished at the furious and ungoverned execration which all reference to the possibility of a fusion of the races draws down upon those who suggest it, because nobody pretends to deny that, throughout the South, a large proportion of the population is the offspring of white men and colored women. In New Orleans, a class of unhappy females exists whose mingled blood does not prevent their being remarkable for their beauty, and with whom no man, no *gentleman*, in that city shrinks from associating; and while the slave-owners of the Southern States insist vehemently upon the mental and physical inferiority of the blacks, they are benevolently doing their best, in one way at least, to raise and improve the degraded race, and the bastard population which forms so ominous an element in the social safety of their cities certainly exhibit in their forms and features the benefit they derive from their white progenitors. It is hard to conceive that some mental improvement does not accompany this physical change. Already the finer forms of the European races are cast in these dusky moulds: the outward configuration can hardly thus improve without corresponding progress in the inward capacities. The white man's blood and bones have begotten this bronze race, and bequeathed to it, in some degree, qualities, tendencies, capabilities, such as are the inheritance of the highest order of human animals. Mr. ———

(and many others) speaks as if there were a natural repugnance in all whites to any alliance with the black race; and yet it is notorious, that almost every Southern planter has a family more or less numerous of illegitimate colored children. Most certainly, few people would like to assert that such connections are formed because it is the *interest* of these planters to increase the number of their human property, and that they add to their revenue by the closest intimacy with creatures that they loathe, in order to reckon among their wealth the children of their body. Surely that is a monstrous and unnatural supposition, and utterly unworthy of belief. That such connections exist commonly is a sufficient proof that they are not abhorrent to nature; but it seems, indeed, as if marriage (and not concubinage) was the horrible enormity which can not be tolerated, and against which, moreover, it has been deemed expedient to enact laws. Now it appears very evident that there is no law in the white man's nature which prevents him from making a colored woman the mother of his children, but there *is* a law on his statute-books forbidding him to make her his wife; and if we are to admit the theory that the mixing of the races is a monstrosity, it seems almost as curious that laws should be enacted to prevent men marrying women toward whom they have an invincible natural repugnance, as that education should by law be prohibited to creatures incapable of receiving it. As for the exhortation with which Mr. — closes his letter, that I will not "go down to my husband's plantation prejudiced against what I am to find there," I know not well how to answer it. Assuredly I *am* going prejudiced against slavery, for I am an Englishwoman, in whom the absence of such a prejudice would be disgraceful. Nevertheless, I go prepared to find many mitigations in the practice to the general injustice and cruelty of the system — much kindness on the part of the masters, much content

on that of the slaves; and I feel very sure that you may rely upon the carefulness of my observation, and the accuracy of my report, of every detail of the working of the thing that comes under my notice; and certainly, on the plantation to which I am going, it will be more likely that I should some things extenuate, than set down aught in malice.

Yours ever faithfully.

Darien, Georgia.

DEAR E——,—Minuteness of detail, and fidelity in the account of my daily doings, will hardly, I fear, render my letters very interesting to you now; but, cut off as I am here from all the usual resources and amusements of civilized existence, I shall find but little to communicate to you that is not furnished by my observations on the novel appearance of external nature, and the moral and physical condition of Mr. ——'s people. The latter subject is, I know, one sufficiently interesting in itself to you, and I shall not scruple to impart all the reflections which may occur to me relative to their state during my stay here, where inquiry into their mode of existence will form my chief occupation, and, necessarily also, the staple commodity of my letters. I purpose, while I reside here, keeping a sort of journal, such as Monk Lewis wrote during his visit to his West India plantations. I wish I had any prospect of rendering my diary as interesting and amusing to you as his was to me.

In taking my first walk on the island, I directed my steps toward the rice mill, a large building on the banks of the river, within a few yards of the house we occupy. Is it not rather curious that Miss Martineau should have mentioned the erection of a steam mill for threshing rice somewhere in the vicinity of Charleston as a singular novelty, likely to form an era in Southern agriculture, and to

produce the most desirable changes in the system of labor by which it is carried on? Now on this estate alone there are three threshing mills—one worked by steam, one by the tide, and one by horses; there are two private steam mills on plantations adjacent to ours, and a public one at Savannah, where the planters who have none on their own estates are in the habit of sending their rice to be threshed at a certain percentage; these have all been in operation for some years, and I therefore am at a loss to understand what made her hail the erection of the one at Charleston as likely to produce such immediate and happy results. By-the-by — of the misstatements, or rather mistakes, for they are such, in her books, with regard to certain facts — her only disadvantage in acquiring information was not by any means that natural infirmity on which the periodical press, both here and in England, has commented with so much brutality. She had the misfortune to possess, too, that unsuspecting reliance upon the truth of others which they are apt to feel who themselves hold truth most sacred; and this was a sore disadvantage to her in a country where I have heard it myself repeatedly asserted—and, what is more, much gloried in—that she was purposely misled by the persons to whom she addressed her inquiries, who did not scruple to disgrace themselves by imposing in the grossest manner upon her credulity and anxiety to obtain information. It is a knowledge of this very shameful proceeding which has made me most especially anxious to avoid *fact hunting*. I might fill my letters to you with accounts received from others, but, as I am aware of the risk which I run in so doing, I shall furnish you with no details but those which come under my own immediate observation. To return to the rice mill: it is worked by a steam-engine of thirty horse power, and, besides threshing great part of our own rice, is kept constantly employed by the neighboring plant-

ers, who send their grain to it in preference to the more distant mill at Savannah, paying, of course, the same percentage, which makes it a very profitable addition to the estate. Immediately opposite to this building is a small shed, which they call the cook's shop, and where the daily allowance of rice and corn grits of the people is boiled and distributed to them by an old woman, whose special business this is. There are four settlements or villages (or, as the negroes call them, camps) on the island, consisting of from ten to twenty houses, and to each settlement is annexed a cook's shop with capacious caldrons, and the oldest wife of the settlement for officiating priestess. Pursuing my walk along the river's bank, upon an artificial dike, sufficiently high and broad to protect the fields from inundation by the ordinary rising of the tide—for the whole island is below high-water mark—I passed the blacksmith's and cooper's shops. At the first all the common iron implements of husbandry or household use for the estate are made, and at the latter all the rice barrels necessary for the crop, besides tubs and buckets, large and small, for the use of the people, and cedar tubs, of noble dimensions and exceedingly neat workmanship, for our own household purposes. The fragrance of these when they are first made, as well as their ample size, renders them preferable as dressing-room furniture, in my opinion, to all the china foot-tubs that ever came out of Staffordshire. After this I got out of the vicinity of the settlement, and pursued my way along a narrow dike—the river on the one hand, and, on the other, a slimy, poisonous-looking swamp, all rattling with sedges of enormous height, in which one might lose one's way as effectually as in a forest of oaks. Beyond this, the low rice-fields, all clothed in their rugged stubble, divided by dikes into monotonous squares, a species of prospect by no means beautiful to the mere lover of the picturesque. The only thing that I met with to attract my

attention was a most beautiful species of ivy, the leaf longer and more graceful than that of the common English creeper, glittering with the highest varnish, delicately veined, and of a rich brown-green, growing in profuse garlands from branch to branch of some stunted evergreen bushes which border the dike, and which the people call salt-water bush. My walks are rather circumscribed, inasmuch as the dikes are the only promenades. On all sides of these lie either the marshy rice-fields, the brimming river, or the swampy patches of yet unreclaimed forest, where the high cypress-trees and exquisite evergreen undergrowth spring up from a stagnant sweltering pool, that effectually forbids the foot of the explorer.

As I skirted one of these thickets to-day, I stood still to admire the beauty of the shrubbery. Every shade of green, every variety of form, every degree of varnish, and all in full leaf and beauty in the very depth of winter. The stunted dark-colored oak; the magnolia bay (like our own culinary and fragrant bay), which grows to a very great size; the wild myrtle, a beautiful and profuse shrub, rising to a height of six, eight, and ten feet, and branching on all sides in luxuriant tufted fullness; most beautiful of all, that pride of the South, the magnolia grandiflora, whose lustrous dark green perfect foliage would alone render it an object of admiration, without the queenly blossom whose color, size, and perfume are unrivaled in the whole vegetable kingdom. This last magnificent creature grows to the size of a forest tree in these swamps, but seldom adorns a high or dry soil, or suffers itself to be successfully transplanted. Under all these the spiked palmetto forms an impenetrable covert, and from glittering graceful branch to branch hang garlands of evergreen creepers, on which the mocking-birds are swinging and singing even now; while I, bethinking me of the pinching cold that is at this hour tyrannizing over your region, look

round on this strange scene—on these green woods, this unfettered river, and sunny sky—and feel very much like one in another planet from yourself.

The profusion of birds here is one thing that strikes me as curious, coming from the vicinity of Philadelphia, where even the robin redbreast, held sacred by the humanity of all other Christian people, is not safe from the *gunning* prowess of the unlicensed sportsmen of your free country. The negroes (of course) are not allowed the use of fire-arms, and their very simply constructed traps do not do much havoc among the feathered hordes that haunt their rice-fields. Their case is rather a hard one, as partridges, snipes, and the most delicious wild ducks abound here, and their allowance of rice and Indian meal would not be the worse for such additions. No day passes that I do not, in the course of my walk, put up a number of the land birds, and startle from among the gigantic sedges the long-necked water-fowl by dozens. It arouses the killing propensity in me most dreadfully, and I really entertain serious thoughts of learning to use a gun, for the mere pleasure of destroying these pretty birds as they whirr from their secret coverts close beside my path. How strong an instinct of animal *humanity* this is, and how strange if one be more strange than another. Reflection rebukes it almost instantaneously, and yet for the life of me I can not help wishing I had a fowling-piece whenever I put up a covey of these creatures; though I suppose, if one were brought bleeding and maimed to me, I should begin to cry, and be very pathetic, after the fashion of Jacques. However, one must live, you know; and here our living consists very mainly of wild ducks, wild geese, wild turkeys, and venison. Now, perhaps, can one imagine the universal doom overtaking a creature with less misery than in the case of the bird who, in the very moment of his triumphant soaring, is brought dead to the



A.M.W.

"Which the people call
Salt Water Bush."

ground. I should like to bargain for such a finis myself amazingly, I know, and have always thought that the death I should prefer would be to break my neck off the back of my horse at a full gallop on a fine day. Of course a bad shot should be hung—a man who shatters his birds' wings and legs; if I undertook the trade, I would learn of some Southern duelist, and always shoot my bird through the head or heart—as an expert murderer knows how. Besides these birds of which we make our prey, there are others that prey upon their own fraternity. Hawks of every sort and size wheel their steady rounds above the rice-fields; and the great turkey-buzzards—those most unsightly carrion birds—spread their broad black wings, and soar over the river like so many mock eagles. I do not know that I ever saw any winged creature of so forbidding an aspect as these same turkey-buzzards; their heavy flight, their awkward gait, their bald-looking head and neck, and their devotion to every species of foul and detestable food, render them almost abhorrent to me. They abound in the South, and in Charleston are held in especial veneration for their scavenger-like propensities, killing one of them being, I believe, a finable offense by the city police regulations. Among the Brobdignagian sedges that in some parts of the island fringe the Altamaha, the nightshade (apparently the same as the European creeper) weaves a perfect matting of its poisonous garlands, and my remembrance of its prevalence in the woods and hedges of England did not reconcile me to its appearance here. How much of this is mere association I can not tell; but, whether the wild duck makes its nest under its green arches, or the alligators and snakes of the Altamaha have their secret bowers there, it is an evil-looking weed, and I shall have every leaf of it cleared away.

I must inform you of a curious conversation which took place between my little girl and the woman who performs

for us the offices of chambermaid here—of course one of Mr. ——'s slaves. What suggested it to the child, or whence indeed she gathered her information, I know not; but children are made of eyes and ears, and nothing, however minute, escapes their microscopic observation. She suddenly began addressing this woman. "Mary, some persons are free and some are not (the woman made no reply). I am a free person (of a little more than three years old). I say, I am a free person, Mary—do you know that?" "Yes, missis." "Some persons are free and some are not—do you know that, Mary?" "Yes, missis, *here*," was the reply; "I know it is so here, in this world." Here my child's white nurse, my dear Margery, who had hitherto been silent, interfered, saying, "Oh, then you think it will not always be so?" "Me hope not, missis." I am afraid, E——, this woman actually imagines that there will be no slaves in heaven; isn't that preposterous, now, when, by the account of most of the Southerners, slavery itself must be heaven, or something uncommonly like it? Oh, if you could imagine how this title "Missis," addressed to me and to my children, shocks all my feelings! Several times I have exclaimed, "For God's sake do not call me that!" and only been awakened, by the stupid amazement of the poor creatures I was addressing, to the perfect uselessness of my thus expostulating with them; once or twice, indeed, I have done more—I have explained to them, and they appeared to comprehend me well, that I had no ownership over them, for that I held such ownership sinful, and that, though I was the wife of the man who pretends to own them, I was, in truth, no more their mistress than they were mine. Some of them I know understood me, more of them did not.

Our servants—those who have been selected to wait upon us in the house—consist of a man, who is quite a tolerable cook (I believe this is a natural gift with them, as

with Frenchmen); a dairy-woman, who churns for us; a laundry-woman; her daughter, our housemaid, the aforesaid Mary; and two young lads of from fifteen to twenty, who wait upon us in the capacity of footmen. As, however, the latter are perfectly filthy in their persons and clothes—their faces, hands, and naked feet being literally incrustated with dirt—their attendance at our meals is not, as you may suppose, particularly agreeable to me, and I dispense with it as often as possible. Mary, too, is so intolerably offensive in her person that it is impossible to endure her proximity, and the consequence is that, among Mr. ——'s slaves, I wait upon myself more than I have ever done in my life before. About this same personal offensiveness, the Southerners, you know, insist that it is inherent with the race, and it is one of their most cogent reasons for keeping them as slaves. But, as this very disagreeable peculiarity does not prevent Southern women from hanging their infants at the breasts of negresses, nor almost every planter's wife and daughter from having one or more little pet blacks sleeping like puppy-dogs in their very bedchamber, nor almost every planter from admitting one or several of his female slaves to the still closer intimacy of his bed, it seems to me that this objection to doing them right is not very valid. I can not imagine that they would smell much worse if they were free, or come in much closer contact with the delicate organs of their white fellow-countrymen; indeed, inasmuch as good deeds are spoken of as having a sweet savor before God, it might be supposed that the freeing of the blacks might prove rather an odoriferous process than the contrary. However this may be, I must tell you that this potent reason for enslaving a whole race of people is no more potent with me than most of the others adduced to support the system, inasmuch as, from observation and some experience, I am strongly inclined to believe that peculiar igno-

rance of the laws of health and the habits of decent cleanliness are the real and only causes of this disagreeable characteristic of the race, thorough ablutions and change of linen, when tried, having been perfectly successful in removing all such objections; and if ever you have come into any thing like neighborly proximity with a low Irishman or woman, I think you will allow that the same causes produce very nearly the same effects. The stench in an Irish, Scotch, Italian, or French hovel are quite as intolerable as any I ever found in our negro houses, and the filth and vermin which abound about the clothes and persons of the lower peasantry of any of those countries as abominable as the same conditions in the black population of the United States. A total absence of self-respect begets these hateful physical results, and in proportion as moral influences are remote, physical evils will abound. Well-being, freedom, and industry induce self-respect, self-respect induces cleanliness and personal attention, so that slavery is answerable for all the evils that exhibit themselves where it exists—from lying, thieving, and adultery, to dirty houses, ragged clothes, and foul smells.

But to return to our Ganymedes. One of them—the eldest son of our laundry-woman, and Mary's brother, a boy of the name of Aleck (Alexander)—is uncommonly bright and intelligent; he performs all the offices of a well-instructed waiter with great efficiency, and any where out of slave land would be able to earn fourteen or fifteen dollars a month for himself; he is remarkably good tempered and well disposed. The other poor boy is so stupid that he appears sullen from absolute darkness of intellect; instead of being a little lower than the angels, he is scarcely a little higher than the brutes, and to this condition are reduced the majority of his kind by the institutions under which they live. I should tell you that Aleck's parents and kindred have always been about the house of the

overseer, and in daily habits of intercourse with him and his wife; and wherever this is the case the effect of involuntary education is evident in the improved intelligence of the degraded race. In a conversation which Mr. —— had this evening with Mr. O——, the overseer, the latter mentioned that two of our carpenters had in their leisure time made a boat, which they had disposed of to some neighboring planter for sixty dollars.

Now, E——, I have no intention of telling you a one-sided story, or concealing from you what are cited as the advantages which these poor people possess; you, who know that no indulgence is worth simple justice, either to him who gives or him who receives, will not thence conclude that their situation thus mitigated is, therefore, what it should be. On this matter of the sixty dollars earned by Mr. ——'s two men much stress was laid by him and his overseer. I look at it thus: If these men were industrious enough, out of their scanty leisure, to earn sixty dollars, how much more of remuneration, of comfort, of improvement might they not have achieved were the price of their daily labor duly paid them, instead of being unjustly withheld to support an idle young man and his idle family—*i. e.*, myself and my children.

And here it may be well to inform you that the slaves on this plantation are divided into field-hands and mechanics or artisans. The former, the great majority, are the more stupid and brutish of the tribe; the others, who are regularly taught their trades, are not only exceedingly expert at them, but exhibit a greater general activity of intellect, which must necessarily result from even a partial degree of cultivation. There are here a gang (for that is the honorable term) of coopers, of blacksmiths, of bricklayers, of carpenters, all well acquainted with their peculiar trades. The latter constructed the wash-hand stands, clothes-presses, sofas, tables, etc., with which our house is

furnished, and they are very neat pieces of workmanship—neither veneered or polished indeed, nor of very costly materials, but of the white pine wood planed as smooth as marble—a species of furniture not very luxurious perhaps, but all the better adapted therefore to the house itself, which is certainly rather more devoid of the conveniences and adornments of modern existence than any thing I ever took up my abode in before. It consists of three small rooms, and three still smaller, which would be more appropriately designated as closets, a wooden recess by way of pantry, and a kitchen detached from the dwelling—a mere wooden out-house, with no floor but the bare earth, and for furniture a congregation of filthy negroes, who lounge in and out of it like hungry hounds at all hours of the day and night, picking up such scraps of food as they can find about, which they discuss squatting down upon their hams, in which interesting position and occupation I generally find a number of them whenever I have sufficient hardihood to venture within those precincts, the sight of which and its tenants is enough to slacken the appetite of the hungriest hunter that ever lost all nice regards in the mere animal desire for food. Of our three apartments, one is our sitting, eating, and *living* room, and is sixteen feet by fifteen. The walls are plastered indeed, but neither painted nor papered; it is divided from our bedroom (a similarly elegant and comfortable chamber) by a dingy wooden partition covered all over with hooks, pegs, and nails, to which hats, caps, keys, etc., etc., are suspended in graceful irregularity. The doors open by wooden latches, raised by means of small bits of packthread—I imagine, the same primitive order of fastening celebrated in the touching chronicle of Red Riding Hood; how they shut I will not attempt to describe, as the shutting of a door is a process of extremely rare occurrence throughout the whole Southern country. The third room,



A.M.W.

The House on Butler's Island.

a chamber with sloping ceiling, immediately over our sitting-room and under the roof, is appropriated to the nurse and my two babies. Of the closets, one is Mr. —, the overseer's, bedroom, the other his office or place of business; and the third, adjoining our bedroom, and opening immediately out of doors, is Mr. —'s dressing-room and cabinet d'affaires, where he gives audiences to the negroes, redresses grievances, distributes red woolen caps (a singular gratification to a slave), shaves himself, and performs the other offices of his toilet. Such being our abode, I think you will allow there is little danger of my being dazzled by the luxurious splendors of a Southern slave residence. Our sole mode of summoning our attendants is by a pack-thread bell-rope suspended in the sitting-room. From the bedrooms we have to raise the windows and our voices, and bring them by power of lungs, or help ourselves—which, I thank God, was never yet a hardship to me.

I mentioned to you just now that two of the carpenters had made a boat in their leisure time. I must explain this to you, and this will involve the mention of another of Miss Martineau's mistakes with regard to slave labor, at least in many parts of the Southern States. She mentions that on one estate of which she knew, the proprietor had made the experiment, and very successfully, of appointing to each of his slaves a certain task to be performed in the day, which once accomplished, no matter how early, the rest of the four-and-twenty hours were allowed to the laborer to employ as he pleased. She mentions this as a single experiment, and rejoices over it as a decided amelioration in the condition of the slave, and one deserving of general adoption. But in the part of Georgia where this estate is situated, the custom of task labor is universal, and it prevails, I believe, throughout Georgia, South Carolina, and parts of North Carolina; in

other parts of the latter state, however—as I was informed by our overseer, who is a native of that state—the estates are small, rather deserving the name of farms, and the laborers are much upon the same footing as the laboring men at the North, working from sunrise to sunset in the fields with the farmer and his sons, and coming in with them to their meals, which they take immediately after the rest of the family. In Louisiana and the new southwestern slave states, I believe, task labor does not prevail; but it is in those that the condition of the poor human cattle is most deplorable, as you know it was there that the humane calculation was not only made, but openly and unhesitatingly avowed, that the planters found it, upon the whole, their most profitable plan to work off (kill with labor) their whole number of slaves about once in seven years, and renew the whole stock. By-the-by, the Jewish institution of slavery is much insisted upon by the Southern upholders of the system; perhaps this is their notion of the Jewish jubilee, when the slaves were by Moses's strict enactment to be all set free. Well, this task system is pursued on this estate; and thus it is that the two carpenters were enabled to make the boat they sold for sixty dollars. These tasks, of course, profess to be graduated according to the sex, age, and strength of the laborer; but in many instances this is not the case, as I think you will agree when I tell you that on Mr. ——'s first visit to his estates he found that the men and the women who labored in the fields had the same task to perform. This was a noble admission of female equality, was it not?—and thus it had been on the estate for many years past. Mr. ——, of course, altered the distribution of the work, diminishing the quantity done by the women.

I had a most ludicrous visit this morning from the midwife of the estate—rather an important personage both to master and slave, as to her unassisted skill and

science the ushering of all the young negroes into their existence of bondage is intrusted. I heard a great deal of conversation in the dressing-room adjoining mine while performing my own toilet, and presently Mr. — opened my room door, ushering in a dirty, fat, good-humored looking old negress, saying, "The midwife, Rose, wants to make your acquaintance." "Oh massa!" shrieked out the old creature, in a paroxysm of admiration, "where you get this lilly alabaster baby!" For a moment I looked round to see if she was speaking of my baby; but no, my dear, this superlative apostrophe was elicited by the fairness of *my skin*: so much for degrees of comparison. Now I suppose that if I chose to walk arm in arm with the dingiest mulatto through the streets of Philadelphia, nobody could possibly tell by my complexion that I was not his sister, so that the mere quality of mistress must have had a most miraculous effect upon my skin in the eyes of poor Rose. But this species of outrageous flattery is as usual with these people as with the low Irish, and arises from the ignorant desire, common to both the races, of propitiating at all costs the fellow-creature who is to them as a Providence — or rather, I should say, a fate — for 'tis a heathen and no Christian relationship. Soon after this visit, I was summoned into the wooden porch or piazza of the house, to see a poor woman who desired to speak to me. This was none other than the tall, emaciated-looking negress who, on the day of our arrival, had embraced me and my nurse with such irresistible zeal. She appeared very ill to-day, and presently unfolded to me a most distressing history of bodily afflictions. She was the mother of a very large family, and complained to me that, what with childbearing and hard field labor, her back was almost broken in two. With an almost savage vehemence of gesticulation, she suddenly tore up her scanty clothing, and exhibited a spectacle with which I

was inconceivably shocked and sickened. The facts, without any of her corroborating statements, bore tolerable witness to the hardships of her existence. I promised to attend to her ailments and give her proper remedies; but these are natural results, inevitable and irremediable ones, of improper treatment of the female frame; and, though there may be alleviation, there can not be any cure when once the beautiful and wonderful structure has been thus made the victim of ignorance, folly, and wickedness.

After the departure of this poor woman, I walked down the settlement toward the Infirmary or hospital, calling in at one or two of the houses along the row. These cabins consist of one room, about twelve feet by fifteen, with a couple of closets smaller and closer than the state-rooms of a ship, divided off from the main room and each other by rough wooden partitions, in which the inhabitants sleep. They have almost all of them a rude bedstead, with the gray moss of the forests for mattress, and filthy, pestilential-looking blankets for covering. Two families (sometimes eight and ten in number) reside in one of these huts, which are mere wooden frames pinned, as it were, to the earth by a brick chimney outside, whose enormous aperture within pours down a flood of air, but little counteracted by the miserable spark of fire, which hardly sends an attenuated thread of lingering smoke up its huge throat. A wide ditch runs immediately at the back of these dwellings, which is filled and emptied daily by the tide. Attached to each hovel is a small scrap of ground for a garden, which, however, is for the most part untended and uncultivated. Such of these dwellings as I visited to-day were filthy and wretched in the extreme, and exhibited that most deplorable consequence of ignorance and an abject condition, the inability of the inhabitants to secure and improve even such pitiful comfort as might yet be achieved by them. Instead of

the order, neatness, and ingenuity which might convert even these miserable hovels into tolerable residences, there was the careless, reckless, filthy indolence which even the brutes do not exhibit in their lairs and nests, and which seemed incapable of applying to the uses of existence the few miserable means of comfort yet within their reach. Firewood and shavings lay littered about the floors, while the half-naked children were cowering round two or three smouldering cinders. The moss with which the chinks and crannies of their ill-protecting dwellings might have been stuffed was trailing in dirt and dust about the ground, while the back door of the huts, opening upon a most unsightly ditch, was left wide open for the fowls and ducks, which they are allowed to raise, to travel in and out, increasing the filth of the cabin by what they brought and left in every direction. In the midst of the floor, or squatting round the cold hearth, would be four or five little children from four to ten years old, the latter all with babies in their arms, the care of the infants being taken from the mothers (who are driven afield as soon as they recover from child labor), and devolved upon these poor little nurses, as they are called, whose business it is to watch the infant, and carry it to its mother whenever it may require nourishment. To these hardly human little beings I addressed my remonstrances about the filth, cold, and unnecessary wretchedness of their room, bidding the elder boys and girls kindle up the fire, sweep the floor, and expel the poultry. For a long time my very words seemed unintelligible to them, till, when I began to sweep and make up the fire, etc., they first fell to laughing, and then imitating me. The incrustations of dirt on their hands, feet, and faces were my next object of attack, and the stupid negro practice (by-the-by, but a short time since nearly universal in enlightened Europe) of keeping the babies with their feet

bare, and their heads, already well capped by nature with their woolly hair, wrapped in half a dozen hot, filthy coverings. Thus I traveled down the "street," in every dwelling endeavoring to awaken a new perception, that of cleanliness, sighing, as I went, over the futility of my own exertions, for how can slaves be improved? Nathless, thought I, let what can be done; for it may be that, the two being incompatible, improvement may yet expel slavery; and so it might, and surely would, if, instead of beginning at the end, I could but begin at the beginning of my task. If the mind and soul were awakened, instead of mere physical good attempted, the physical good would result, and the great curse vanish away; but my hands are tied fast, and this corner of the work is all that I may do. Yet it can not be but, from my words and actions, some revelations should reach these poor people; and going in and out among them perpetually, I shall teach, and they learn involuntarily a thousand things of deepest import. They must learn, and who can tell the fruit of that knowledge alone, that there are beings in the world, even with skins of a different color from their own, who have sympathy for their misfortunes, love for their virtues, and respect for their common nature—but oh! my heart is full almost to bursting as I walk among these most poor creatures.

The Infirmary is a large two-story building, terminating the broad orange-planted space between the two rows of houses which form the first settlement; it is built of whitewashed wood, and contains four large-sized rooms. But how shall I describe to you the spectacle which was presented to me on entering the first of these? But half the casements, of which there were six, were glazed, and these were obscured with dirt, almost as much as the other windowless ones were darkened by the dingy shutters, which the shivering inmates had fastened

to in order to protect themselves from the cold. In the enormous chimney glimmered the powerless embers of a few sticks of wood, round which, however, as many of the sick women as could approach were cowering, some on wooden settles, most of them on the ground, excluding those who were too ill to rise; and these last poor wretches lay prostrate on the floor, without bed, mattress, or pillow, buried in tattered and filthy blankets, which, huddled round them as they lay strewed about, left hardly space to move upon the floor. And here, in their hour of sickness and suffering, lay those whose health and strength are spent in unrequited labor for us—those who, perhaps even yesterday, were being urged on to their unpaid task—those whose husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons were even at that hour sweating over the earth, whose produce was to buy for us all the luxuries which health can revel in, all the comforts which can alleviate sickness. I stood in the midst of them, perfectly unable to speak, the tears pouring from my eyes at this sad spectacle of their misery, myself and my emotion alike strange and incomprehensible to them. Here lay women expecting every hour the terrors and agonies of childbirth, others who had just brought their doomed offspring into the world, others who were groaning over the anguish and bitter disappointment of miscarriages—here lay some burning with fever, others chilled with cold and aching with rheumatism, upon the hard cold ground, the draughts and dampness of the atmosphere increasing their sufferings, and dirt, noise, and stench, and every aggravation of which sickness is capable, combined in their condition—here they lay like brute beasts, absorbed in physical suffering; unvisited by any of those Divine influences which may ennoble the dispensations of pain and illness, forsaken, as it seemed to me, of all good; and yet, O God, Thou surely hadst not forsaken them! Now pray take notice that this is the hospital of an estate where the

owners are supposed to be humane, the overseer efficient and kind, and the negroes remarkably well cared for and comfortable. As soon as I recovered from my dismay, I addressed old Rose the midwife, who had charge of this room, bidding her open the shutters of such windows as were glazed, and let in the light. I next proceeded to make up the fire; but, upon my lifting a log for that purpose, there was one universal outcry of horror, and old Rose, attempting to snatch it from me, exclaimed, "Let alone, missis—let be; what for you lift wood? you have nigger enough, missis, to do it!" I hereupon had to explain to them my view of the purposes for which hands and arms were appended to our bodies, and forthwith began making Rose tidy up the miserable apartment, removing all the filth and rubbish from the floor that could be removed, folding up in piles the blankets of the patients who were not using them, and placing, in rather more sheltered and comfortable positions, those who were unable to rise. It was all that I could do, and having enforced upon them all my earnest desire that they should keep their room swept, and as tidy as possible, I passed on to the other room on the ground floor, and to the two above, one of which is appropriated to the use of the men who are ill. They were all in the same deplorable condition, the upper rooms being rather the more miserable, inasmuch as none of the windows were glazed at all, and they had, therefore, only the alternative of utter darkness, or killing draughts of air from the unsheltered casements. In all, filth, disorder, and misery abounded; the floor was the only bed, and scanty begrimed rags of blankets the only covering. I left this refuge for Mr. ——'s sick dependents with my clothes covered with dust, and full of vermin, and with a heart heavy enough, as you will well believe. My morning's work had fatigued me not a little, and I was glad to return to the house, where I gave vent

to my indignation and regret at the scene I had just witnessed to Mr. —— and his overseer, who, here, is a member of our family. The latter told me that the condition of the hospital had appeared to him, from his first entering upon his situation (only within the last year), to require a reform, and that he had proposed it to the former manager, Mr. K——, and Mr. ——'s brother, who is part proprietor of the estate, but, receiving no encouragement from them, had supposed that it was a matter of indifference to the owners, and had left it in the condition in which he had found it, in which condition it has been for the last nineteen years and upward.

This new overseer of ours has lived fourteen years with an old Scotch gentleman, who owns an estate adjoining Mr. ——'s, on the island of St. Simon's, upon which estate, from every thing I can gather, and from what I know of the proprietor's character, the slaves are probably treated with as much humanity as is consistent with slavery at all, and where the management and comfort of the hospital in particular had been most carefully and judiciously attended to. With regard to the indifference of our former manager upon the subject of the accommodation for the sick, he was an excellent overseer, *videlicet* the estate returned a full income under his management, and such men have nothing to do with sick slaves: they are tools, to be mended only if they can be made available again; if not, to be flung by as useless, without farther expense of money, time, or trouble.

I am learning to row here, for circumscribed, as my walks necessarily are, impossible as it is to resort to my favorite exercise on horseback upon these narrow dikes, I must do something to prevent my blood from stagnating; and this broad brimming river, and the beautiful light canoes which lie moored at the steps, are very inviting persuaders to this species of exercise. My first attempt

was confined to pulling an oar across the stream, for which I rejoiced in sundry aches and pains altogether novel, letting alone a delightful row of blisters on each of my hands.

I forgot to tell you that in the hospital were several sick babies, whose mothers were permitted to suspend their field labor in order to nurse them. Upon addressing some remonstrances to one of these, who, besides having a sick child, was ill herself, about the horribly dirty condition of her baby, she assured me that it was impossible for them to keep their children clean; that they went out to work at daybreak, and did not get their tasks done till evening, and that then they were too tired and worn out to do any thing but throw themselves down and sleep. This statement of hers I mentioned on my return from the hospital, and the overseer appeared extremely annoyed by it, and assured me repeatedly that it was not true.

In the evening Mr. —, who had been over to Darien, mentioned that one of the storekeepers there had told him that, in the course of a few years, he had paid the negroes of this estate several thousand dollars for moss, which is a very profitable article of traffic with them: they collect it from the trees, dry and pick it, and then sell it to the people in Darien for mattresses, sofas, and all sorts of stuffing purposes, which, in my opinion, it answers better than any other material whatever that I am acquainted with, being as light as horse-hair, as springy and elastic, and a great deal less harsh and rigid. It is now bedtime, dear E—, and I doubt not it has been sleepy time with you over this letter long ere you came thus far. There is a preliminary to my repose, however, in this agreeable residence, which I rather dread, namely, the hunting for, or discovering without hunting, in fine relief upon the whitewashed walls of my bedroom, a most



"The Reed-crowned edge of
the Island."

hideous and detestable species of *reptile* called centipedes, which come out of the cracks and crevices of the walls, and fill my very heart with dismay. They are from an inch to two inches long, and appear to have not a hundred, but a thousand legs. I can not ascertain very certainly from the negroes whether they sting or not, but they look exceedingly as if they might, and I visit my babies every night in fear and trembling, lest I should find one or more of these hateful creatures mounting guard over them. Good-night; you are well to be free from centipedes—better to be free from slaves.

DEAR E——, —This morning I paid my second visit to the Infirmary, and found there had been some faint attempt at sweeping and cleaning, in compliance with my entreaties. The poor woman Harriet, however, whose statement with regard to the impossibility of their attending properly to their children had been so vehemently denied by the overseer, was crying bitterly. I asked her what ailed her, when, more by signs and dumb show than words, she and old Rose informed me that Mr. O—— had flogged her that morning for having told me that the women had not time to keep their children clean. It is part of the regular duty of every overseer to visit the Infirmary at least once a day, which he generally does in the morning, and Mr. O——'s visit had preceded mine but a short time only, or I might have been edified by seeing a man horsewhip a woman. I again and again made her repeat her story, and she again and again affirmed that she had been flogged for what she told me, none of the whole company in the room denying it or contradicting her. I left the room because I was so disgusted and indignant that I could hardly restrain my feelings, and to express them could have produced no single

good result. In the next ward, stretched upon the ground, apparently either asleep or so overcome with sickness as to be incapable of moving, lay an immense woman; her stature, as she cumbered the earth, must have been, I should think, five feet seven or eight, and her bulk enormous. She was wrapped in filthy rags, and lay with her face on the floor. As I approached, and stooped to see what ailed her, she suddenly threw out her arms, and, seized with violent convulsions, rolled over and over upon the floor, beating her head violently upon the ground, and throwing her enormous limbs about in a horrible manner. Immediately upon the occurrence of this fit, four or five women threw themselves literally upon her, and held her down by main force; they even proceeded to bind her legs and arms together, to prevent her dashing herself about; but this violent coercion and tight bandaging seemed to me, in my profound ignorance, more likely to increase her illness by impeding her breathing and the circulation of her blood, and I bade them desist, and unfasten all the strings and ligatures not only that they had put round her limbs, but which, by tightening her clothes round her body, caused any obstruction. How much I wished that, instead of music, and dancing, and such stuff, I had learned something of sickness and health, of the conditions and liabilities of the human body, that I might have known how to assist this poor creature, and to direct her ignorant and helpless nurses! The fit presently subsided, and was succeeded by the most deplorable prostration and weakness of nerves, the tears streaming down the poor woman's cheeks in showers, without, however, her uttering a single word, though she moaned incessantly. After bathing her forehead, hands, and chest with vinegar, we raised her up, and I sent to the house for a chair with a back (there was no such thing in the hospital), and we contrived to place her

in it. I have seldom seen finer women than this poor creature and her younger sister, an immense strapping lass called Chloe — tall, straight, and extremely well made—who was assisting her sister, and whom I had remarked, for the extreme delight and merriment which my cleansing propensities seemed to give her, on my last visit to the hospital. She was here taking care of a sick baby, and helping to nurse her sister Molly, who, it seems, is subject to those fits, about which I spoke to our physician here—an intelligent man residing in Darien, who visits the estate whenever medical assistance is required. He seemed to attribute them to nervous disorder, brought on by frequent childbearing. This woman is young, I suppose at the outside not thirty, and her sister informed me that she had had ten children—ten children, E——! Fits and hard labor in the fields, unpaid labor, labor exacted with stripes—how do you fancy that? I wonder if my mere narration can make your blood boil as the facts did mine? Among the patients in this room was a young girl, apparently from fourteen to fifteen, whose hands and feet were literally rotting away piecemeal, from the effect of a horrible disease, to which the negroes are subject here, and I believe in the West Indies, and when it attacks the joints of the toes and fingers, the pieces absolutely decay and come off, leaving the limb a maimed and horrible stump! I believe no cure is known for this disgusting malady, which seems confined to these poor creatures. Another disease, of which they complained much, and which, of course, I was utterly incapable of accounting for, was a species of lock-jaw, to which their babies very frequently fall victims in the first or second week after their birth, refusing the breast, and the mouth gradually losing the power of opening itself. The horrible diseased state of head, common among their babies, is a mere result of filth and confinement, and therefore, though

I never any where saw such distressing and disgusting objects as some of these poor little woolly skulls presented, the cause was sufficiently obvious. Pleurisy, or a tendency to it, seems very common among them; also peripneumonia, or inflammation of the lungs, which is terribly prevalent, and generally fatal. Rheumatism is almost universal; and as it proceeds from exposure, and want of knowledge and care, attacks indiscriminately the young and old. A great number of the women are victims to falling of the womb and weakness in the spine; but these are necessary results of their laborious existence, and do not belong either to climate or constitution.

I have ingeniously contrived to introduce bribery, corruption, and pauperism, all in a breath, upon this island, which, until my advent, was as innocent of these pollutions, I suppose, as Prospero's isle of refuge. Wishing, however, to appeal to some perception, perhaps a little less dim in their minds than the abstract loveliness of cleanliness, I have proclaimed to all the little baby nurses that I will give a cent to every little boy or girl whose baby's face shall be clean, and one to every individual with clean face and hands of their own. My appeal was fully comprehended by the majority, it seems, for this morning I was surrounded, as soon as I came out, by a swarm of children carrying their little charges on their backs and in their arms, the shining, and, in many instances, wet faces and hands of the latter bearing ample testimony to the ablutions which had been inflicted upon them. How they will curse me and the copper cause of all their woes in their baby bosoms! Do you know that, little as grown negroes are admirable for their personal beauty (in my opinion, at least), the black babies of a year or two old are very pretty; they have, for the most part, beautiful eyes and eyelashes, the pearly perfect teeth, which they retain after their other juvenile graces have left them;

their skins are all (I mean of blacks generally) infinitely finer and softer than the skins of white people. Perhaps you are not aware that among the white race the *finest grained* skins generally belong to persons of dark complexion. This, as a characteristic of the black race, I think might be accepted as some compensation for the coarse woolly hair. The nose and mouth, which are so peculiarly displeasing in their conformation in the face of a negro man or woman, being the features least developed in a baby's countenance, do not at first present the ugliness which they assume as they become more marked; and when the very unusual operation of washing has been performed, the blood shines through the fine texture of the skin, giving life and richness to the dingy color, and displaying a species of beauty which I think scarcely any body who observed it would fail to acknowledge. I have seen many babies on this plantation who were quite as pretty as white children, and this very day stooped to kiss a little sleeping creature that lay on its mother's knees in the Infirmary—as beautiful a specimen of a sleeping infant as I ever saw. The caress excited the irrepressible delight of all the women present—poor creatures! who seemed to forget that I was a woman, and had children myself, and bore a woman's and a mother's heart toward them and theirs; but, indeed, the Honorable Mr. Slumkey could not have achieved more popularity by his performances in that line than I by this exhibition of feeling; and, had the question been my election, I am very sure nobody else would have had a chance of a vote through the island. But wisely is it said that use is second nature, and the contempt and neglect to which these poor people are used make the commonest expression of human sympathy appear a boon and gracious condescension. While I am speaking of the negro countenance, there is another beauty which is not at all unfrequent among those I see here

—a finely-shaped oval face—and those who know (as all painters and sculptors, all who understand beauty do) how much expression there is in the outline of the head, and how very rare it is to see a well-formed face, will be apt to consider this a higher matter than any coloring, of which, indeed, the red and white one so often admired is by no means the most rich, picturesque, or expressive. At first the dark color confounded all features to my eye, and I could hardly tell one face from another. Becoming, however, accustomed to the complexion, I now perceive all the variety among these black countenances that there is among our own race, and as much difference in features and in expression as among the same number of whites. There is another peculiarity which I have remarked among the women here—very considerable beauty in the make of the hands; their feet are very generally ill made, which must be a natural, and not an acquired defect, as they seldom injure their feet by wearing shoes. The figures of some of the women are handsome, and their carriage, from the absence of any confining or tightening clothing, and the habit they have of balancing great weights on their heads, erect and good.

At the upper end of the row of houses, and nearest to our overseer's residence, is the hut of the head driver. Let me explain, by the way, his office. The negroes, as I before told you, are divided into troops or gangs, as they are called; at the head of each gang is a driver, who stands over them, whip in hand, while they perform their daily task, who renders an account of each individual slave and his work every evening to the overseer, and receives from him directions for their next day's tasks. Each driver is allowed to inflict a dozen lashes upon any refractory slave in the field, and at the time of the offense; they may not, however, extend the chastisement, and if it is found ineffectual, their remedy lies in reporting the unmanageable

individual either to the head driver or the overseer, the former of whom has power to inflict three dozen lashes at his own discretion, and the latter as many as he himself sees fit, within the number of fifty; which limit, however, I must tell you, is an arbitrary one on this plantation, appointed by the founder of the estate, Major ——, Mr. ——'s grandfather, many of whose regulations, indeed I believe most of them, are still observed in the government of the plantation. Limits of this sort, however, to the power of either driver, head driver, or overseer, may or may not exist elsewhere; they are, to a certain degree, a check upon the power of these individuals; but in the absence of the master, the overseer may confine himself within the limit or not, as he chooses; and as for the master himself, where is his limit? He may, if he likes, flog a slave to death, for the laws which pretend that he may not are a mere pretense, inasmuch as the testimony of a black is never taken against a white; and upon this plantation of ours, and a thousand more, the overseer is the *only* white man, so whence should come the testimony to any crime of his? With regard to the oft-repeated statement that it is not the owner's interest to destroy his human property, it answers nothing; the instances in which men, to gratify the immediate impulse of passion, sacrifice not only their eternal, but their evident, palpable, positive worldly interest, are infinite. Nothing is commoner than for a man under the transient influence of anger to disregard his worldly advantage; and the black slave, whose preservation is indeed supposed to be his owner's interest, may be, will be, and is occasionally sacrificed to the blind impulse of passion.

To return to our head driver, or, as he is familiarly called, head man, Frank—he is second in authority only to the overseer, and exercises rule alike over the drivers and the gangs in the absence of the sovereign white man

from the estate, which happens whenever Mr. O—— visits the other two plantations at Woodville and St. Simon's. He is sole master and governor of the island, appoints the work, pronounces punishments, gives permission to the men to leave the island (without it they never may do so), and exercises all functions of undisputed mastery over his fellow-slaves, for you will observe that all this while he is just as much a slave as any of the rest. Trustworthy, upright, intelligent, he may be flogged to-morrow if Mr. O—— or Mr. —— so please it, and sold the next day, like a cart-horse, at the will of the latter. Besides his various other responsibilities, he has the key of all the stores, and gives out the people's rations weekly; nor is it only the people's provisions that are put under his charge—meat, which is only given out to them occasionally, and provisions for the use of the family, are also intrusted to his care. Thus you see, among these *inferior* creatures, their own masters yet look to find, surviving all their best efforts to destroy them, good sense, honesty, self-denial, and all the qualities, mental and moral, that make one man worthy to be trusted by another. From the imperceptible but inevitable effect of the sympathies and influences of human creatures toward and over each other, Frank's intelligence has become uncommonly developed by intimate communion in the discharge of his duty with the former overseer, a very intelligent man, who has only just left the estate, after managing it for nineteen years; the effect of this intercourse, and of the trust and responsibility laid upon the man, are that he is clear-headed, well judging, active, intelligent, extremely well mannered, and, being respected, he respects himself. He is as ignorant as the rest of the slaves; but he is always clean and tidy in his person, with a courteousness of demeanor far removed from servility, and exhibits a strong instance of the intolerable and wicked injustice of the system under

which he lives, having advanced thus far toward improvement, in spite of all the bars it puts to progress; and here being arrested, not by want of energy, want of sense, or any want of his own, but by being held as another man's property, who can only thus hold him by forbidding him farther improvement. When I see that man, who keeps himself a good deal aloof from the rest, in his leisure hours looking, with a countenance of deep thought, as I did to-day, over the broad river, which is to him as a prison wall, to the fields and forest beyond, not one inch or branch of which his utmost industry can conquer as his own, or acquire and leave an independent heritage to his children, I marvel what the thoughts of such a man may be. I was in his house to-day, and the same superiority in cleanliness, comfort, and propriety exhibited itself in his dwelling as in his own personal appearance and that of his wife—a most active, trustworthy, excellent woman, daughter of the oldest, and probably most highly respected of all Mr. ——'s slaves. To the excellent conduct of this woman, and, indeed, every member of her family, both the present and the last overseer bear unqualified testimony.

As I was returning toward the house after my long morning's lounge, a man rushed out of the blacksmith's shop, and, catching me by the skirt of my gown, poured forth a torrent of self-gratulations on having at length found the "right missis." They have no idea, of course, of a white person performing any of the offices of a servant, and as throughout the whole Southern country the owner's children are nursed and tended, and sometimes *suckled* by their slaves (I wonder how this inferior milk agrees with the lordly *white* babies?), the appearance of M—— with my two children had immediately suggested the idea that she must be the missis. Many of the poor negroes flocked to her, paying their profound homage under this impression; and when she explained to them

that she was not their owner's wife, the confusion in their minds seemed very great—Heaven only knows whether they did not conclude that they had two mistresses, and Mr. — two wives; for the privileged race must seem, in their eyes, to have such absolute masterdom on earth, that perhaps they thought polygamy might be one of the sovereign white men's numerous indulgences. The ecstasy of the blacksmith on discovering the "right missis" at last was very funny, and was expressed with such extraordinary grimaces, contortions, and gesticulations, that I thought I should have died of laughing at this rapturous identification of my most melancholy relation to the poor fellow.

Having at length extricated myself from the group which forms round me whenever I stop but for a few minutes, I pursued my voyage of discovery by peeping into the kitchen garden. I dared do no more; the aspect of the place would have rejoiced the very soul of Solomon's sluggard of old—a few cabbages and weeds innumerable filled the neglected-looking inclosure, and I ventured no farther than the entrance into its most uninviting precincts. You are to understand that upon this swamp island of ours we have quite a large stock of cattle, cows, sheep, pigs, and poultry in the most enormous and inconvenient abundance. The cows are pretty miserably off for pasture, the banks and pathways of the dikes being their only grazing ground, which the sheep perambulate also, in earnest search of a nibble of fresh herbage; both the cows and sheep are fed with rice flour in great abundance, and are pretty often carried down for change of air and more sufficient grazing to Hampton, Mr. —'s estate, on the island of St. Simon's, fifteen miles from this place, farther down the river—or rather, indeed, I should say in the sea, for 'tis salt water all round, and one end of the island has a noble beach open to the vast Atlantic.

The pigs thrive admirably here, and attain very great perfection of size and flavor, the rice flour upon which they are chiefly fed tending to make them very delicate. As for the poultry, it being one of the few privileges of the poor blacks to raise as many as they can, their abundance is literally a nuisance—ducks, fowls, pigeons, turkeys (the two latter species, by-the-by, are exclusively the master's property), cluck, scream, gabble, gobble, crow, cackle, fight, fly, and flutter in all directions, and to their immense concourse, and the perfect freedom with which they intrude themselves even into the piazza of the house, the pantry, and kitchen, I partly attribute the swarms of fleas, and other still less agreeable vermin, with which we are most horribly pestered.

My walk lay to-day along the bank of a canal, which has been dug through nearly the whole length of the island, to render more direct and easy the transportation of the rice from one end of the estate to another, or from the various distant fields to the principal mill at Settlement No. 1. It is of considerable width and depth, and opens by various locks into the river. It has, unfortunately, no trees on its banks, but a good foot-path renders it, in spite of that deficiency, about the best walk on the island. I passed again to-day one of those beautiful evergreen thickets, which I described to you in my last letter; it is called a reserve, and is kept uncleared and uncultivated in its natural swampy condition, to allow of the people's procuring their firewood from it. I can not get accustomed, so as to be indifferent to this exquisite natural ornamental growth, and think, as I contemplate the various and beautiful foliage of these watery woods, how many of our finest English parks and gardens owe their chiefest adornments to plantations of these shrubs, procured at immense cost, reared with infinite pains and care, which are here basking in the winter's sunshine, waiting to be cut down

for firewood! These little groves are peopled with wild pigeons and birds, which they designate here as black-birds. These sometimes rise from the rice fields with a whirr of multitudinous wings that is almost startling, and positively overshadow the ground beneath like a cloud.

I had a conversation that interested me a good deal, during my walk to-day, with my peculiar slave Jack. This lad, whom Mr. — has appointed to attend me in my roamings about the island, and rowing expeditions on the river, is the son of the last head driver, a man of very extraordinary intelligence and faithfulness—such, at least, is the account given of him by his employers (in the burial-ground of the negroes is a stone dedicated to his memory, a mark of distinction accorded by his masters, which his son never failed to point out to me when we passed that way). Jack appears to inherit his quickness of apprehension; his questions, like those of an intelligent child, are absolutely inexhaustible; his curiosity about all things beyond this island, the prison-house of his existence, is perfectly intense; his countenance is very pleasing, mild, and not otherwise than thoughtful; he is, in common with the rest of them, a stupendous flatterer, and, like the rest of them, also seems devoid of physical and moral courage. To-day, in the midst of his torrent of inquiries about places and things, I suddenly asked him if he would like to be free. A gleam of light absolutely shot over his whole countenance, like the vivid and instantaneous lightning; he stammered, hesitated, became excessively confused, and at length replied, “Free, missis! what for me wish to be free? Oh no, missis, me no wish to be free, if massa only let we keep pig!” The fear of offending by uttering that forbidden wish—the dread of admitting, by its expression, the slightest discontent with his present situation—the desire to conciliate my favor, even at the expense of strangling the intense natural long-



Cypress, at the
old Flood-Gate.

ing that absolutely glowed in his every feature—it was a sad spectacle, and I repented my question. As for the pitiful request, which he reiterated several times, adding, “No, missis, me no want to be free; me work till me die for missis and massa,” with increased emphasis; it amounted only to this, that negroes once were, but no longer are, permitted to keep pigs. The increase of filth and foul smells consequent upon their being raised is, of course, very great; and, moreover, Mr. — told me, when I preferred poor Jack’s request to him, that their allowance was no more than would suffice their own necessity, and that they had not the means of feeding the animals. With a little good management they might very easily obtain them, however; their little “kail-yard” alone would suffice to it, and the pork and bacon would prove a most welcome addition to their farinaceous diet. You perceive at once (or, if you could have seen the boy’s face, you would have perceived at once) that his situation was no mystery to him; that his value to Mr. —, and, as he supposed, to me, was perfectly well known to him, and that he comprehended immediately that his expressing even the desire to be free might be construed by me into an offense, and sought, by eager protestations of his delighted acquiescence in slavery, to conceal his soul’s natural yearning, lest I should resent it. ’Twas a sad passage between us, and sent me home full of the most painful thoughts. I told Mr. —, with much indignation, of poor Harriet’s flogging, and represented that if the people were to be chastised for any thing they said to me, I must leave the place, as I could not but hear their complaints, and endeavor, by all my miserable limited means, to better their condition while I was here. He said he would ask Mr. O—— about it, assuring me, at the same time, that it was impossible to believe a single word any of these people said. At dinner, accordingly, the inquiry

was made as to the cause of her punishment, and Mr. O—— then said it was not at all for what she had told me that he had flogged her, but for having answered him impertinently; that he had ordered her into the field, whereupon she had said she was ill and could not work; that he retorted he knew better, and bade her get up and go to work; she replied, “Very well, I’ll go, but I shall just come back again!” meaning that when in the field she would be unable to work, and obliged to return to the hospital. “For this reply,” Mr. O—— said, “I gave her a good lashing; it was her business to have gone into the field without answering me, and then we should have soon seen whether she could work or not; I gave it to Chloe too for some such impudence.” I give you the words of the conversation, which was prolonged to a great length, the overseer complaining of the sham sicknesses of the slaves, and detailing the most disgusting struggle which is going on the whole time, on the one hand to inflict, and on the other to evade oppression and injustice. With this sauce I ate my dinner, and truly it tasted bitter.

Toward sunset I went on the river to take my rowing lesson. A darling little canoe, which carries two oars and a steersman, and rejoices in the appropriate title of the “Dolphin,” is my especial vessel; and with Jack’s help and instructions, I contrived this evening to row upward of half a mile, coasting the reed-crowned edge of the island to another very large rice mill, the enormous wheel of which is turned by the tide. A small bank of mud and sand, covered with reedy coarse grass, divides the river into two arms on this side of the island; the deep channel is on the outside of this bank, and as we rowed home this evening, the tide having fallen, we scraped sand almost the whole way. Mr. ——’s domain, it seems to me, will presently fill up this shallow stream, and join itself to

the above-mentioned mud-bank. The whole course of this most noble river is full of shoals, banks, mud, and sand-bars, and the navigation, which is difficult to those who know it well, is utterly baffling to the inexperienced. The fact is, that the two elements are so fused hereabouts that there are hardly such things as earth or water proper; that which styles itself the former is a fat, muddy, slimy sponge, that, floating half under the turbid river, looks yet saturated with the thick waves which every now and then reclaim their late dominion, and cover it almost entirely; the water, again, cloudy and yellow, like pea-soup, seems but a solution of such islands, rolling turbid and thick with alluvium, which it both gathers and deposits as it sweeps along with a swollen, smooth rapidity, that almost deceives the eye. Amphibious creatures, alligators, serpents, and wild-fowl haunt these yet but half-formed regions, where land and water are of the consistency of hasty-pudding—the one seeming too unstable to walk on, the other almost too thick to float in. But then the sky—if no human chisel ever yet cut breath, neither did any human pen ever write light; if it did, mine should spread out before you the unspeakable glories of these Southern heavens, the saffron brightness of morning, the blue intense brilliancy of noon, the golden splendor and the rosy softness of sunset. Italy and Claude Lorraine may go hang themselves together! Heaven itself does not seem brighter or more beautiful to the imagination than these surpassing pageants of fiery rays, and piled-up beds of orange, golden clouds, with edges too bright to look on, scattered wreaths of faintest rosy bloom, amber streaks and pale green lakes between, and amid sky all mingled blue and rose tints, a spectacle to make one fall over the side of the boat, with one's head broken off with looking adoringly upward, but which, on paper, means nothing.

At six o'clock our little canoe grazed the steps at the

landing. These were covered with young women, and boys, and girls, drawing water for their various household purposes. A very small cedar pail—a piggin as they termed it—serves to scoop up the river water; and having, by this means, filled a large bucket, they transfer this to their heads, and, thus laden, march home with the purifying element—what to do with it I can not imagine, for evidence of its ever having been introduced into their dwellings I saw none. As I ascended the stairs, they surrounded me with shrieks and yells of joy, uttering exclamations of delight and amazement at my rowing. Considering that they dig, delve, carry burdens, and perform many more athletic exercises than pulling a light oar, I was rather amused at this; but it was the singular fact of seeing a white woman stretch her sinews in any toilsome exercise which astounded them, accustomed as they are to see both men and women of the privileged skin eschew the slightest shadow of labor as a thing not only painful, but degrading. They will learn another lesson from me, however, whose idea of heaven was pronounced by a friend of mine, to whom I once communicated it, to be “devilish hard work!” It was only just six o’clock, and these women had all done their tasks. I exhorted them to go home and wash their children, and clean their houses and themselves, which they professed themselves ready to do, but said they had no soap. Then began a chorus of mingled requests for soap, for summer clothing, and a variety of things, which, if “Missis only give we, we be so clean forever!”

This request for summer clothing, by-the-by, I think a very reasonable one. The allowance of clothes made yearly to each slave by the present regulations of the estate is a certain number of yards of flannel, and as much more of what they call plains—an extremely stout, thick, heavy woolen cloth, of a dark gray or blue color, which resem-

bles the species of carpet we call drugget. This, and two pair of shoes, is the regular ration of clothing; but these plains would be intolerable to any but negroes, even in winter, in this climate, and are intolerable to them in the summer. A far better arrangement, in my opinion, would be to increase their allowance of flannel and under clothing, and to give them dark chintzes instead of these thick carpets, which are very often the only covering they wear at all. I did not impart all this to my petitioners, but, disengaging myself from them, for they held my hands and clothes, I conjured them to offer us some encouragement to better their condition by bettering it as much as they could themselves—enforced the virtue of washing themselves and all belonging to them, and at length made good my retreat. As there is no particular reason why such a letter as this should ever come to an end, I had better spare you for the present. You shall have a faithful journal, I promise you, henceforward, as hitherto, from yours ever.

DEAR E——,—We had a species of fish this morning for our breakfast which deserves more glory than I can bestow upon it. Had I been the ingenious man who wrote a poem upon fish, the white mullet of the Altamaha should have been at least my heroine's cousin. 'Tis the heavenliest creature that goes upon fins. I took a long walk this morning to Settlement No. 3, the third village on the island. My way lay along the side of the canal, beyond which, and only divided from it by a raised narrow causeway, rolled the brimming river, with its girdle of glittering evergreens, while on my other hand a deep trench marked the line of the rice fields. It really seemed as if the increase of merely a shower of rain might join all these waters together, and lay the island under its original cov-

ering again. I visited the people and houses here. I found nothing in any respect different from what I have described to you at Settlement No. 1. During the course of my walk, I startled from its repose in one of the rice fields a huge blue heron. You must have seen, as I often have, these creatures stuffed in museums; but 'tis another matter, and far more curious, to see them stalking on their stilts of legs over a rice field, and then, on your near approach, see them spread their wide heavy wings, and throw themselves upon the air, with their long shanks flying after them in a most grotesque and laughable manner. They fly as if they did not know how to do it very well; but standing still, their height (between four and five feet) and peculiar color, a dusky, grayish blue, with black about the head, render their appearance very beautiful and striking.

In the afternoon I and Jack rowed ourselves over to Darien. It is Saturday—the day of the week on which the slaves from the island are permitted to come over to the town to purchase such things as they may require and can afford, and to dispose, to the best advantage, of their poultry, moss, and eggs. I met many of them paddling themselves singly in their slight canoes, scooped out of the trunk of a tree, and parties of three and four rowing boats of their own building, laden with their purchases, singing, laughing, talking, and apparently enjoying their holiday to the utmost. They all hailed me with shouts of delight as I pulled past them, and many were the injunctions bawled after Jack to “mind and take good care of missis!” We returned home through the glory of a sunset all amber-colored and rosy, and found that one of the slaves, a young lad for whom Mr. —— has a particular regard, was dangerously ill. Dr. H—— was sent for; and there is every probability that he, Mr. ——, and Mr. O—— will be up all night with the poor fellow. I shall write

more to-morrow. To-day being Sunday, dear E——, a large boat full of Mr. ——'s people from Hampton came up, to go to church at Darien, and to pay their respects to their master, and see their new "missis." The same scene was acted over again that occurred on our first arrival. A crowd clustered round the house door, to whom I and my babies were produced, and with every individual of whom we had to shake hands some half a dozen times. They brought us up presents of eggs (their only wealth), beseeching us to take them; and one young lad, the son of head man Frank, had a beautiful pair of chickens, which he offered most earnestly to S——. We took one of them, not to mortify the poor fellow, and a green ribbon being tied round its leg, it became a sacred fowl, "little missis's chicken." By-the-by, this young man had so light a complexion, and such regular straight features, that, had I seen him any where else, I should have taken him for a southern European, or, perhaps, in favor of his tatters, a gipsy; but certainly it never would have occurred to me that he was the son of negro parents. I observed this to Mr. ——, who merely replied, "He is the son of head man Frank and his wife Betty, and they are both black enough, as you see." The expressions of devotion and delight of these poor people are the most fervent you can imagine. One of them, speaking to me of Mr. ——, and saying that they had heard that he had not been well, added, "Oh! we hear so, missis, and we not know what to do. Oh! missis, massa sick, all him people *broken!*"

Dr. H—— came again to-day to see the poor sick boy, who is doing much better, and bidding fair to recover. He entertained me with an account of the Darien society, its aristocracies and democracies, its little grandeurs and smaller pettinesses, its circles higher and lower, its social jealousies, fine invisible lines of demarkation, impercepti-

ble shades of different respectability, and delicate divisions of genteel, genteeler, genteelest. "For me," added the worthy doctor, "I can not well enter into the spirit of these nice distinctions; it suits neither my taste nor my interest, and my house is, perhaps, the only one in Darien where you would find all these opposite and contending elements combined." The doctor is connected with the aristocracy of the place, and, like a wise man, remembers, notwithstanding, that those who are not are quite as liable to be ill, and call in medical assistance, as those who are. He is a shrewd, intelligent man, with an excellent knowledge of his profession, much kindness of heart, and apparent cheerful good temper. I have already severely tried the latter by the unequivocal expression of my opinions on the subject of slavery, and, though I perceived that it required all his self-command to listen with anything like patience to my highly incendiary and inflammatory doctrines, he yet did so, and though he was, I have no doubt, perfectly horror-stricken at the discovery, lost nothing of his courtesy or good-humor. By-the-by, I must tell you that, at an early period of the conversation, upon my saying, "I put all other considerations out of the question, and first propose to you the injustice of the system alone," "Oh," replied my friend the doctor, "if you put it upon that ground, you *stump* the question at once; I have nothing to say to that whatever, but," and then followed the usual train of pleadings—happiness, tenderness, care, indulgence, etc., etc., etc.—all the substitutes that may or may not be put in the place of *justice*, and which these slaveholders attempt to persuade others, and perhaps themselves, effectually supply its want. After church hours the people came back from Darien. They are only permitted to go to Darien to church once a month. On the intermediate Sundays they assemble in the house of London, Mr. ——'s head cooper, an excellent and pious

man, who, Heaven alone knows how, has obtained some little knowledge of reading, and who reads prayers and the Bible to his fellow-slaves, and addresses them with extemporaneous exhortations. I have the greatest desire to attend one of these religious meetings, but fear to put the people under any, the slightest restraint. However, I shall see by-and-by how they feel about it themselves.

You have heard, of course, many and contradictory statements as to the degree of religious instruction afforded to the negroes of the South, and their opportunities of worship, etc. Until the late abolition movement, the spiritual interests of the slaves were about as little regarded as their physical necessities. The outcry which has been raised with threefold force within the last few years against the whole system has induced its upholders and defenders to adopt, as measures of personal extenuation, some appearance of religious instruction (such as it is), and some pretense at physical indulgences (such as they are), bestowed apparently voluntarily upon their dependents. At Darien a church is appropriated to the especial use of the slaves, who are almost all of them Baptists here; and a gentleman officiates in it (of course white), who, I understand, is very zealous in the cause of their spiritual well-being. He, like most Southern men, clergy or others, jump the present life in their charities to the slaves, and go on to furnish them with all requisite conveniences for the next. There were a short time ago two free black preachers in this neighborhood, but they have lately been ejected from the place. I could not clearly learn, but one may possibly imagine, upon what grounds.

I do not think that a residence on a slave plantation is likely to be peculiarly advantageous to a child like my eldest. I was observing her to-day among her swarthy worshipers, for they follow her as such, and saw, with dis-

may, the universal eagerness with which they sprang to obey her little gestures of command. She said something about a swing, and in less than five minutes head man Frank had erected it for her, and a dozen young slaves were ready to swing little "missis." —, think of learning to rule despotically your fellow-creatures before the first lesson of self-government has been well spelt over! It makes me tremble; but I shall find a remedy, or remove myself and the child from this misery and ruin.

You can not conceive any thing more grotesque than the Sunday trim of the poor people, their ideality, as Mr. Combe would say, being, I should think, twice as big as any rational bump in their head. Their Sabbath toilet really presents the most ludicrous combination of incongruities that you can conceive—frills, flounces, ribbons; combs stuck in their woolly heads, as if they held up any portion of the stiff and ungovernable hair; filthy finery, every color in the rainbow, and the deepest possible shades blended in fierce companionship round one dusky visage; head-handkerchiefs, that put one's very eyes out from a mile off; chintzes with sprawling patterns, that might be seen if the clouds were printed with them; beads, bugles, flaring sashes, and, above all, little fanciful aprons, which finish these incongruous toilets with a sort of airy grace, which I assure you is perfectly indescribable. One young man, the eldest son and heir of our washerwoman Hannah, came to pay his respects to me in a magnificent black satin waistcoat, shirt gills which absolutely engulfed his black visage, and neither shoes nor stockings on his feet.

Among our visitors from St. Simon's to-day was Hannah's mother (it seems to me that there is not a girl of sixteen on the plantations but has children, nor a woman of thirty but has grandchildren). Old House Molly, as she is called, from the circumstance of her having been one of the slaves employed in domestic offices during Ma-

jor ——'s residence on the island, is one of the oldest and most respected slaves on the estate, and was introduced to me by Mr. —— with especial marks of attention and regard; she absolutely embraced him, and seemed unable sufficiently to express her ecstasy at seeing him again. Her dress, like that of her daughter, and all the servants who have at any time been employed about the family, bore witness to a far more improved taste than the half savage adornment of the other poor blacks, and upon my observing to her how agreeable her neat and cleanly appearance was to me, she replied that her old master (Major ——) was extremely particular in this respect, and that in his time all the house servants were obliged to be very nice and careful about their persons.

She named to me all her children, an immense tribe; and, by-the-by, E——, it has occurred to me that whereas the increase of this ill-fated race is frequently adduced as a proof of their good treatment and well being, it really and truly is no such thing, and springs from quite other causes than the peace and plenty which a rapidly increasing population are supposed to indicate. If you will reflect for a moment upon the overgrown families of the half-starved Irish peasantry and English manufacturers, you will agree with me that these prolific shoots by no means necessarily spring from a rich or healthy soil. Peace and plenty are certainly causes of human increase, and so is recklessness; and this, I take it, is the impulse in the instance of the English manufacturer, the Irish peasant, and the negro slave. Indeed here it is more than recklessness, for there are certain indirect premiums held out to obey the early commandment of replenishing the earth which do not fail to have their full effect. In the first place, none of the cares—those noble cares, that holy thoughtfulness which lifts the human above the brute parent, are ever incurred here by either father or mother.

The relation indeed resembles, as far as circumstances can possibly make it do so, the short-lived connection between the animal and its young. The father, having neither authority, power, responsibility, or charge in his children, is of course, as among brutes, the least attached to his offspring; the mother, by the natural law which renders the infant dependent on her for its first year's nourishment, is more so; but as neither of them is bound to educate or to support their children, all the unspeakable tenderness and solemnity, all the rational, and all the spiritual grace and glory of the connection, is lost, and it becomes mere breeding, bearing, suckling, and there an end. But it is not only the absence of the conditions which God has affixed to the relation which tends to encourage the reckless increase of the race; they enjoy, by means of numerous children, certain positive advantages. In the first place, every woman who is pregnant, as soon as she chooses to make the fact known to the overseer, is relieved of a certain portion of her work in the field, which lightening of labor continues, of course, as long as she is so burdened. On the birth of a child certain additions of clothing and an additional weekly ration are bestowed on the family; and these matters, small as they may seem, act as powerful inducements to creatures who have none of the restraining influences actuating them which belong to the parental relation among all other people, whether civilized or savage. Moreover, they have all of them a most distinct and perfect knowledge of their value to their owners as property; and a woman thinks, and not much amiss, that the more frequently she adds to the number of her master's live-stock by bringing new slaves into the world, the more claims she will have upon his consideration and good-will. This was perfectly evident to me from the meritorious air with which the women always made haste to inform me of the number of children they had borne,

and the frequent occasions on which the older slaves would direct my attention to their children, exclaiming, "Look, missis! little niggers for you and massa; plenty little niggers for you and little missis!" A very agreeable apostrophe to me indeed, as you will believe.

I have let this letter lie for a day or two, dear E——, from press of more immediate avocations. I have nothing very particular to add to it. On Monday evening I rowed over to Darien with Mr. —— to fetch over the doctor, who was coming to visit some of our people. As I sat waiting in the boat for the return of the gentlemen, the sun went down, or rather seemed to dissolve bodily into the glowing clouds, which appeared but a fusion of the great orb of light; the stars twinkled out in the rose-colored sky, and the evening air, as it fanned the earth to sleep, was as soft as a summer's evening breeze in the north. A sort of dreamy stillness seemed creeping over the world and into my spirit as the canoe just tilted against the steps that led to the wharf, raised by the scarce perceptible heaving of the water. A melancholy, monotonous boat-horn sounded from a distance up the stream, and presently, floating slowly down with the current, huge, shapeless, black, relieved against the sky, came one of those rough barges piled with cotton, called, hereabouts, Ocone boxes. The vessel itself is really nothing but a monstrous square box, made of rough planks, put together in the roughest manner possible to attain the necessary object of keeping the cotton dry. Upon this great tray are piled the swollen, apoplectic-looking cotton-bags, to the height of ten, twelve, and fourteen feet. This huge water-wagon floats lazily down the river, from the upper country to Darien. They are flat-bottomed, and, of course, draw little water. The stream from whence they are named is an up-country river, which, by its junction with the Ocmulgee, forms the Altamaha. Here at least,

you perceive, the Indian names remain, and long may they do so, for they seem to me to become the very character of the streams and mountains they indicate, and are indeed significant to the learned in savage tongues, which is more than can be said of such titles as Jones's Creek, Onion Creek, etc. These Ocone boxes are broken up at Darien, where the cotton is shipped either for the Savannah, Charleston, or Liverpool markets, and the timber of which they are constructed sold.

We rowed the doctor over to see some of his patients on the island, and before his departure a most animated discussion took place upon the subject of the President of the United States, his talents, qualifications, opinions—above all, his views with regard to the slave system. Mr. —, who you know is no abolitionist, and is a very devoted Van Buren man, maintained with great warmth the President's straightforwardness, and his evident and expressed intention of protecting the rights of the South. The doctor, on the other hand, quoted a certain speech of the President's upon the question of abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia, which his fears interpreted into a mere evasion of the matter, and an indication that at some future period he (Mr. Van Buren) might take a different view of the subject. I confess, for my own part, that if the doctor quoted the speech right, and if the President is not an honest man, and if I were a Southern slaveholder, I should not feel altogether secure of Mr. Van Buren's present opinions or future conduct upon this subject. These three *ifs*, however, are material points of consideration. Our friend the doctor inclined vehemently to Mr. Clay as one on whom the slaveholders could depend. Georgia, however, as a state, is perhaps the most democratic in the Union; though here, as well as in other places that you and I know of, a certain class, calling themselves the first, and honestly believing themselves the best, set

their faces against the modern fashioned republicanism, professing, and, I have no doubt, with great sincerity, that their ideas of democracy are altogether of a different kind.

I went again to-day to the Infirmary, and was happy to perceive that there really was an evident desire to conform to my instructions, and keep the place in a better condition than formerly. Among the sick I found a poor woman suffering dreadfully from the earache. She had done nothing to alleviate her pain but apply some leaves, of what tree or plant I could not ascertain, and tie up her head in a variety of dirty cloths, till it was as large as her whole body. I removed all these, and found one side of her face and neck very much swollen, but so begrimed with filth that it was really no very agreeable task to examine it. The first process, of course, was washing, which, however, appeared to her so very unusual an operation, that I had to perform it for her myself. Sweet oil and laudanum, and raw cotton, being then applied to her ear and neck, she professed herself much relieved, but I believe in my heart that the warm water sponging had done her more good than any thing else. I was sorry not to ascertain what leaves she had applied to her ear. These simple remedies resorted to by savages, and people as ignorant, are generally approved by experience, and sometimes condescendingly adopted by science. I remember once, when Mr. — was suffering from a severe attack of inflammatory rheumatism, Dr. C— desired him to bind round his knee the leaves of the tulip-tree—poplar I believe you call it—saying that he had learned that remedy from the negroes in Virginia, and found it a most effectual one. My next agreeable office in the Infirmary this morning was superintending the washing of two little babies, whose mothers were nursing them with quite as much ignorance as zeal. Having ordered a large tub of water, I desired Rose to undress the little creatures and give them

a warm bath; the mothers looked on in unutterable dismay; and one of them, just as her child was going to be put into the tub, threw into it all the clothes she had just taken off it, as she said, to break the unusual shock of the warm water. I immediately rescued them; not but what they were quite as much in want of washing as the baby, but it appeared, upon inquiry, that the woman had none others to dress the child in when it should have taken its bath; they were immediately wrung and hung by the fire to dry; and the poor little patients, having undergone this novel operation, were taken out and given to their mothers. Any thing, however, much more helpless and inefficient than these poor ignorant creatures you can not conceive; they actually seemed incapable of drying or dressing their own babies, and I had to finish their toilet myself. As it is only a very few years since the most absurd and disgusting customs have become exploded among ourselves, you will not, of course, wonder that these poor people pin up the lower part of their infants, bodies, legs, and all, in red flannel as soon as they are born, and keep them in the self-same envelope till it literally falls off.

In the next room I found a woman lying on the floor in a fit of epilepsy, barking most violently. She seemed to excite no particular attention or compassion; the women said she was subject to these fits, and took little or no notice of her, as she lay barking like some enraged animal on the ground. Again I stood in profound ignorance, sickening with the sight of suffering which I knew not how to alleviate, and which seemed to excite no commiseration merely from the sad fact of its frequent occurrence. Returning to the house, I passed up the "street." It was between eleven o'clock and noon, and the people were taking their first meal in the day. By-the-by, E——, how do you think Berkshire county farmers would relish laboring hard all day upon *two meals* of Indian corn or

hominny? Such is the regulation on this plantation, however, and I beg you to bear in mind that the negroes on Mr. ——'s estate are generally considered well off. They go to the fields at daybreak, carrying with them their allowance of food for the day, which toward noon, *and not till then*, they eat, cooking it over a fire, which they kindle as best they can, where they are working. Their second meal in the day is at night, after their labor is over, having worked, at the *very least*, six hours without intermission of rest or refreshment since their noonday meal (properly so called, for 'tis meal, and nothing else). Those that I passed to-day, sitting on their door-steps, or on the ground round them eating, were the people employed at the mill and threshing-floor. As these are near to the settlement, they had time to get their food from the cook-shop. Chairs, tables, plates, knives, forks, they had none; they sat, as I before said, on the earth or door-steps, and ate either out of their little cedar tubs or an iron pot, some few with broken iron spoons, more with pieces of wood, and all the children with their fingers. A more complete sample of savage feeding I never beheld. At one of the doors I saw three young girls standing, who might be between sixteen and seventeen years old; they had evidently done eating, and were rudely playing and romping with each other, laughing and shouting like wild things. I went into the house, and such another spectacle of filthy disorder I never beheld. I then addressed the girls most solemnly, showing them that they were wasting in idle riot the time in which they might be rendering their abode decent, and told them that it was a shame for any woman to live in so dirty a place and so beastly a condition. They said they had seen buckree (white) women's houses just as dirty, and they could not be expected to be cleaner than white women. I then told them that the only difference between themselves and

buckree women was, that the latter were generally better informed, and, for that reason alone, it was more disgraceful to them to be disorderly and dirty. They seemed to listen to me attentively, and one of them exclaimed, with great satisfaction, that they saw I made no difference between them and white girls, and that they never had been so treated before. I do not know any thing which strikes me as a more melancholy illustration of the degradation of these people than the animal nature of their recreations in their short seasons of respite from labor. You see them, boys and girls, from the youngest age to seventeen and eighteen, rolling, tumbling, kicking, and wallowing in the dust, regardless alike of decency, and incapable of any more rational amusement; or lolling, with half-closed eyes, like so many cats and dogs, against a wall, or upon a bank in the sun, dozing away their short leisure hour, until called to resume their labors in the field or the mill. After this description of the meals of our laborers, you will, perhaps, be curious to know how it fares with our house servants in this respect. Precisely in the same manner, as far as regards allowance, with the exception of what is left from our table, but, if possible, with even less comfort, in one respect, inasmuch as no time whatever is set apart for their meals, which they snatch at any hour, and in any way that they can—generally, however, standing, or squatting on their hams round the kitchen fire. They have no sleeping-rooms in the house, but when their work is over, retire, like the rest, to their hovels, the discomfort of which has to them all the addition of comparison with our mode of living. Now, in all establishments whatever, of course some disparity exists between the comforts of the drawing-room and best bedrooms, and the servants' hall and attics, but here it is no longer a matter of degree. The young woman who performs the office of lady's-maid, and the lads who wait upon us at ta-

ble, have neither table to feed at nor chair to sit down upon themselves. The boys sleep at night on the hearth by the kitchen fire, and the women upon a rough board bedstead, strewed with a little tree moss. All this shows how very torpid the sense of justice is apt to lie in the breasts of those who have it not awakened by the peremptory demands of others.

In the North we could not hope to keep the worst and poorest servant for a single day in the wretched discomfort in which our negro servants are forced habitually to live. I received a visit this morning from some of the Darien people. Among them was a most interesting young person, from whose acquaintance, if I have any opportunity of cultivating it, I promise myself much pleasure. The ladies that I have seen since I crossed the Southern line have all seemed to me extremely sickly in their appearance—delicate in the refined term, but unfortunately sickly in the truer one. They are languid in their deportment and speech, and seem to give themselves up, without an effort to counteract it, to the enervating effect of their warm climate. It is undoubtedly a most relaxing and unhealthy one, and therefore requires the more imperatively to be met by energetic and invigorating habits both of body and mind. Of these, however, the Southern ladies appear to have, at present, no very positive idea. Doctor — told us to-day of a comical application which his negro man had made to him for the coat he was then wearing. I forget whether the fellow wanted the loan, or the absolute gift of it, but his argument was (it might have been an Irishman's) that he knew his master intended to give it to him by-and-by, and that he thought he might as well let him have it at once as keep him waiting any longer for it. This story the doctor related with great glee, and it furnishes a very good sample of what the Southerners are fond of exhibiting,

the degree of license to which they capriciously permit their favorite slaves occasionally to carry their familiarity. They seem to consider it as an undeniable proof of the general kindness with which their dependents are treated. It is as good a proof of it as the maudlin tenderness of a fine lady to her lapdog is of her humane treatment of animals in general. Servants whose claims to respect are properly understood by themselves and their employers, are not made pets, playthings, jesters, or companions of, and it is only the degradation of the many that admits of this favoritism to the few—a system of favoritism which, as it is perfectly consistent with the profoundest contempt and injustice, degrades the object of it quite as much, though it oppresses him less, than the cruelty practiced upon his fellows. I had several of these favorite slaves presented to me, and one or two little negro children, who their owners assured me were quite pets. The only real service which this arbitrary good-will did to the objects of it was quite involuntary and unconscious on the part of their kind masters—I mean the inevitable improvement in intelligence which resulted to them from being more constantly admitted to the intercourse of the favored white race.

I must not forget to tell you of a magnificent bald-headed eagle which Mr. — called me to look at early this morning. I had never before seen alive one of these national types of yours, and stood entranced as the noble creature swept, like a black cloud, over the river, his bald white head bent forward and shining in the sun, and his fierce eyes and beak directed toward one of the beautiful wild ducks on the water, which he had evidently marked for his prey. The poor little duck, who was not ambitious of such a glorification, dived, and the eagle hovered above the spot. After a short interval, its victim rose to the surface several yards nearer shore. The great king of



The House from the Dyke.

birds stooped nearer, and again the watery shield was interposed. This went on until the poor water-fowl, driven by excess of fear into unwonted boldness, rose, after repeatedly diving, within a short distance of where we stood. The eagle, who, I presume, had read how we were to have dominion over the fowls of the air (bald-headed eagles included), hovered sulkily a while over the river, and then, sailing slowly toward the woods on the opposite shore, alighted and furled his great wings on a huge cypress limb, that stretched itself out against the blue sky, like the arm of a giant, for the giant bird to perch upon.

I am amusing myself by attempting to beautify, in some sort, this residence of ours. Immediately at the back of it runs a ditch, about three feet wide, which empties and fills twice a day with the tide. This lies like a moat on two sides of the house. The opposite bank is a steep dike, with a footpath along the top. One or two willows droop over this very interesting ditch, and I thought I would add to their company some magnolias and myrtles, so as to make a little evergreen plantation round the house. I went to the swamp reserves I have before mentioned to you, and chose some beautiful bushes—among others, a very fine young pine, at which our overseer and all the negroes expressed much contemptuous surprise; for, though the tree is beautiful, it is also common, and with them, as with wiser folk, 'tis “nothing pleases but rare accidents.” In spite of their disparaging remarks, however, I persisted in having my pine-tree planted, and I assure you it formed a very pleasing variety among the broad, smooth-leaved evergreens about it. While forming my plantation, I had a brand thrown into a bed of tall yellow sedges which screen the brimming waters of the noble river from our parlor window, and which I therefore wished removed. The small sample of a Southern conflagration which ensued was very picturesque, the flames devouring the light

growth, absolutely licking it off the ground, while the curling smoke drew off in misty wreaths across the river. The heat was intense, and I thought how exceedingly and unpleasantly warm one must feel in the midst of such a forest burning as Cooper describes. Having worked my appointed task in the garden, I rowed over to Darien and back, the rosy sunset changing mean time to starry evening, as beautiful as the first the sky ever was arrayed in.

I saw an advertisement this morning in the paper which occasioned me much thought. Mr. J—— C—— and a Mr. N——, two planters of this neighborhood, have contracted to dig a canal, called the Brunswick Canal, and, not having hands enough for the work, advertise at the same time for negroes on hire and for Irish laborers. Now the Irishmen are to have twenty dollars a month wages, and to be “found” (to use the technical phrase), which finding means abundant food, and the best accommodations which can be procured for them. The negroes are hired from their masters, who will be paid, of course, as high a price as they can obtain for them—probably a very high one, as the demand for them is urgent—they, in the mean time, receiving no wages, and nothing more than the miserable negro fare of rice and corn grits. Of course the Irishmen and these slaves are not allowed to work together, but are kept at separate stations on the canal. This is every way politic, for the low Irish seem to have the same sort of hatred of negroes which sects, differing but little in their tenets, have for each other. The fact is, that a condition in their own country nearly similar has made the poor Irish almost as degraded a class of beings as the negroes are here, and their insolence toward them, and hatred of them, are precisely in proportion to the resemblance between them. This hiring out of negroes is a horrid aggravation of the miseries of their condition; for if, on the plantations, and under the masters to whom they belong,

their labor is severe and their food inadequate, think what it must be when they are hired out for a stipulated sum to a temporary employer, who has not even the interest which it is pretended an owner may feel in the welfare of his slaves, but whose chief aim it must necessarily be to get as much out of them, and expend as little on them, as possible. Ponder this new form of iniquity, and believe me ever your most sincerely attached.

DEAREST E——,—After finishing my last letter to you, I went out into the clear starlight to breathe the delicious mildness of the air, and was surprised to hear rising from one of the houses of the settlement a hymn sung apparently by a number of voices. The next morning I inquired the meaning of this, and was informed that those negroes on the plantation who were members of the Church were holding a prayer-meeting. There is an immensely strong devotional feeling among these poor people. The worst of it is, that it is zeal without understanding, and profits them but little; yet light is light, even that poor portion that may stream through a keyhole, and I welcome this most ignorant profession of religion in Mr. ——'s dependents as the herald of better and brighter things for them. Some of the planters are entirely inimical to any such proceedings, and neither allow their negroes to attend worship, or to congregate together for religious purposes, and truly I think they are wise in their own generation. On other plantations, again, the same rigid discipline is not observed; and some planters and overseers go even farther than toleration, and encourage these devotional exercises and professions of religion, having actually discovered that a man may become more faithful and trustworthy, even as a slave, who acknowledges the higher influences of Christianity, no matter in how small a de-

gree. Slaveholding clergymen, and certain piously inclined planters, undertake, accordingly, to enlighten these poor creatures upon these matters, with a safe understanding, however, of what truth is to be given to them, and what is not; how much they may learn to become better slaves, and how much they may not learn, lest they cease to be slaves at all. The process is a very ticklish one, and but for the Northern public opinion, which is now pressing the slaveholders close, I dare say would not be attempted at all. As it is, they are putting their own throats and their own souls in jeopardy by this very endeavor to serve God and Mammon. The light that they are letting in between their fingers will presently strike them blind, and the mighty flood of truth which they are straining through a sieve to the thirsty lips of their slaves sweep them away like straws from their cautious moorings, and overwhelm them in its great deeps, to the waters of which man may in nowise say, thus far shall ye come and no farther. The community I now speak of, the white population of Darien, should be a religious one, to judge by the number of churches it maintains. However, we know the old proverb, and, at that rate, it may not be so godly after all. Mr. — and his brother have been called upon at various times to subscribe to them all; and I saw this morning a most fervent appeal, extremely ill spelled, from a gentleman living in the neighborhood of the town, and whose slaves are notoriously ill treated, reminding Mr. — of the precious souls of his human cattle, and requesting a farther donation for the Baptist Church, of which most of the people here are members. Now this man is known to be a hard master; his negro houses are sheds not fit to stable beasts in; his slaves are ragged, half naked, and miserable; yet he is urgent for their religious comforts, and writes to Mr. — about “their souls—their precious souls.” He was

over here a few days ago, and pressed me very much to attend his church. I told him I would not go to a church where the people who worked for us were parted off from us as if they had the pest, and we should catch it of them. I asked him, for I was curious to know, how they managed to administer the sacrament to a mixed congregation? He replied, Oh, very easily; that the white portion of the assembly received it first, and the blacks afterward. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." Oh, what a shocking mockery! However, they show their faith, at all events, in the declaration that God is no respecter of persons, since they do not pretend to exclude from His table those whom they most certainly would not admit to their own.

I have, as usual, allowed this letter to lie by, dear E——, not in the hope of the occurrence of any event—for that is hopeless—but until my daily avocations allowed me leisure to resume it, and afforded me, at the same time, matter wherewith to do so. I really never was so busy in all my life as I am here. I sit at the receipt of custom (involuntarily enough) from morning till night—no time, no place, affords me a respite from my innumerable petitioners; and whether I be asleep or awake, reading, eating, or walking—in the kitchen, my bedroom, or the parlor, they flock in with urgent entreaties and pitiful stories, and my conscience forbids my ever postponing their business for any other matter; for, with shame and grief of heart I say it, by their unpaid labor I live—their nakedness clothes me, and their heavy toil maintains me in luxurious idleness. Surely the least I can do is to hear these, my most injured benefactors; and, indeed, so intense in me is the sense of the injury they receive from me and mine, that I should scarce dare refuse them the very clothes from my back, or food from

my plate, if they asked me for it. In taking my daily walk round the banks yesterday, I found that I was walking over violet roots. The season is too little advanced for them to be in bloom, and I could not find out whether they were the fragrant violet or not.

Mr. — has been much gratified to-day by the arrival of Mr. K——, who, with his father, for nineteen years was the sole manager of these estates, and discharged his laborious task with great ability and fidelity toward his employers. How far he understood his duties to the slaves, or whether, indeed, an overseer can, in the nature of things, acknowledge any duty to them, is another question. He is a remarkable man, and is much respected for his integrity and honorable dealing by every body here. His activity and energy are wonderful; and the mere fact of his having charge of for nineteen years, and personally governing, without any assistance whatever, seven hundred people scattered over three large tracts of land, at a considerable distance from each other, certainly bespeaks efficiency and energy of a very uncommon order. The character I had heard of him from Mr. — had excited a great deal of interest in me, and I was very glad of this opportunity of seeing a man who for so many years had been sovereign over the poor people here. I met him walking on the banks with Mr. — as I returned from my own ramble, during which nothing occurred or appeared to interest me, except, by-the-by, my unexpectedly coming quite close to one of those magnificent scarlet birds which abound here, and which dart across your path like a winged flame. Nothing can surpass the beauty of their plumage, and their voice is excellently melodious—they are lovely.

My companions, when I do not request the attendance of my friend Jack, are a couple of little terriers, who are endowed to perfection with the ugliness and the intelli-

gence of their race; they are of infinite service on the plantation, as, owing to the immense quantity of grain, and chaff, and such matters, rats and mice abound in the mills and store-houses. I crossed the threshing-floor to-day—a very large square, perfectly level, raised by artificial means about half a foot from the ground, and covered equally all over, so as to lie quite smooth, with some preparation of tar. It lies immediately between the house and the steam mill, and on it much of the negroes' work is done—the first threshing is given to the rice, and other labors are carried on. As I walked across it to-day, passing through the busy groups, chiefly of women, that covered it, I came opposite to one of the drivers, who held in his hand his whip, the odious insignia of his office. I took it from him; it was a short stick of moderate size, with a thick square leather thong attached to it. As I held it in my hand, I did not utter a word; but I conclude, as is often the case, my face spoke what my tongue did not, for the driver said, "Oh, missis, me use it for measure; me seldom strike nigger with it." For one moment I thought I must carry the hateful implement into the house with me. An instant's reflection, however, served to show me how useless such a proceeding would be. The people are not mine, nor their drivers, nor their whips. I should but have impeded, for a few hours, the man's customary office, and a new scourge would have been easily provided, and I should have done nothing, perhaps worse than nothing.

After dinner I had a most interesting conversation with Mr. K——. Among other subjects, he gave me a lively and curious description of the Yeomanry of Georgia, more properly termed pine-landers. Have you visions now of well-to-do farmers with comfortable homesteads, decent habits, industrious, intelligent, cheerful, and thrifty? Such, however, is not the Yeomanry of Georgia. Labor being

here the especial portion of slaves, it is thenceforth degraded, and considered unworthy of all but slaves. No white man, therefore, of any class puts hand to work of any kind soever. This is an exceedingly dignified way of proving their gentility for the lazy planters who prefer an idle life of semistarvation and barbarism to the degradation of doing any thing themselves; but the effect on the poorer whites of the country is terrible. I speak now of the scattered white population, who, too poor to possess land or slaves, and having no means of living in the towns, squat (most appropriately is it so termed) either on other men's land or government districts—always here swamp or pine barren—and claim masterdom over the place they invade till ejected by the rightful proprietors. These wretched creatures will not, for they are whites (and labor belongs to blacks and slaves alone here), labor for their own subsistence. They are hardly protected from the weather by the rude shelters they frame for themselves in the midst of these dreary woods. Their food is chiefly supplied by shooting the wild-fowl and venison, and stealing from the cultivated patches of the plantations nearest at hand. Their clothes hang about them in filthy tatters, and the combined squalor and fierceness of their appearance is really frightful.

This population is the direct growth of slavery. The planters are loud in their execrations of these miserable vagabonds; yet they do not see that so long as labor is considered the disgraceful portion of slaves, these free men will hold it nobler to starve or steal than till the earth, with none but the despised blacks for fellow-laborers. The blacks themselves—such is the infinite power of custom—acquiesce in this notion, and, as I have told you, consider it the lowest degradation in a white to use any exertion. I wonder, considering the burdens they have seen me lift, the digging, the planting, the rowing,

and the walking I do, that they do not utterly contemn me, and, indeed, they seem lost in amazement at it.

Talking of these pine-landers—gipsies, without any of the romantic associations that belong to the latter people—led us to the origin of such a population, slavery; and you may be sure I listened with infinite interest to the opinions of a man of uncommon shrewdness and sagacity, who was born in the very bosom of it, and has passed his whole life among slaves. If any one is competent to judge of its effects, such a man is the one; and this was his verdict: “I hate slavery with all my heart; I consider it an absolute curse wherever it exists. It will keep those states where it does exist fifty years behind the others in improvement and prosperity.” Farther on in the conversation he made this most remarkable observation: “As for its being an irremediable evil—a thing not to be helped or got rid of—that’s all nonsense; for, as soon as people become convinced that it is their interest to get rid of it, they will soon find the means to do so, depend upon it.” And undoubtedly this is true. This is not an age, nor yours a country, where a large mass of people will long endure what they perceive to be injurious to their fortunes and advancement. Blind as people often are to their highest and truest interests, your country folk have generally shown remarkable acuteness in finding out where their worldly progress suffered let or hinderance, and have removed it with laudable alacrity. Now the fact is not at all as we at the North are sometimes told, that the Southern slaveholders deprecate the evils of slavery quite as much as we do; that they see all its miseries; that, moreover, they are most anxious to get rid of the whole thing, but want the means to do so, and submit most unwillingly to a necessity from which they can not extricate themselves. All this I thought might be true before I went to the South, and often has the charitable supposi-

tion checked the condemnation which was indignantly rising to my lips against these murderers of their brethren's peace. A little reflection, however, even without personal observation, might have convinced me that this could not be the case. If the majority of Southerners were satisfied that slavery was contrary to their worldly fortunes, slavery would be at an end from that very moment; but the fact is—and I have it not only from observation of my own, but from the distinct statement of some of the most intelligent Southern men that I have conversed with—the only obstacle to immediate abolition throughout the South is the immense value of the human property, and, to use the words of a very distinguished Carolinian, who thus ended a long discussion we had on the subject, "I'll tell you why abolition is impossible: because every healthy negro can fetch a thousand dollars in the Charleston market at this moment." And this opinion, you see, tallies perfectly with the testimony of Mr. K——.

He went on to speak of several of the slaves on this estate as persons quite remarkable for their fidelity and intelligence, instancing old Molly, Ned the engineer, who has the superintendence of the steam-engine in the rice mill, and head man Frank, of whom, indeed, he wound up the eulogium by saying he had quite the principles of a white man, which I thought most equivocal praise, but he did not intend it as such. As I was complaining to Mr. —— of the terribly neglected condition of the dikes, which are in some parts so overgrown with gigantic briars that 'tis really impossible to walk over them, and the trench on one hand, and river on the other, afford one extremely disagreeable alternatives, Mr. K—— cautioned me to be particularly on my guard not to step on the thorns of the orange-tree. These, indeed, are formidable spikes, and, he assured me, were peculiarly poisonous to the flesh. Some of the most painful and tedious wounds he had ever



The Blossoming Dykes.

seen, he said, were incurred by the negroes running these large green thorns into their feet.

This led him to speak of the glory and beauty of the orange-trees on the island before a certain uncommonly severe winter, a few years ago, destroyed them all. For five miles round the banks grew a double row of noble orange-trees, as large as our orchard apple-trees, covered with golden fruit and silver flowers. It must have been a most magnificent spectacle, and Captain F——, too, told me, in speaking of it, that he had brought Basil Hall here in the season of the trees blossoming, and he had said it was as well worth crossing the Atlantic to see that as to see the Niagara. Of all these noble trees nothing now remains but the roots, which bear witness to their size, and some young sprouts shooting up, affording some hope that, in the course of years, the island may wear its bridal garland again. One huge stump close to the door is all that remains of an enormous tree that overtopped the house, from the upper windows of which oranges have been gathered from off its branches, and which, one year, bore the incredible number of 8542 oranges. Mr. K—— assured me of this as a positive fact, of which he had at the time made the entry in his journal, considering such a crop from a single tree well worthy of record. Mr. —— was called out this evening to listen to a complaint of overwork from a gang of pregnant women. I did not stay to listen to the details of their petition, for I am unable to command myself on such occasions, and Mr. —— seemed positively degraded in my eyes as he stood enforcing upon these women the necessity of their fulfilling their appointed tasks. How honorable he would have appeared to me begrimed with the sweat and soil of the coarsest manual labor, to what he then seemed, setting forth to these wretched, ignorant women, as a duty, their unpaid exacted labor! I turned away in bitter disgust. I hope

this sojourn among Mr. ——'s slaves may not lessen my respect for him, but I fear it; for the details of slaveholding are so unmanly, letting alone every other consideration, that I know not how any one with the spirit of a man can condescend to them.

I have been out again on the river, rowing. I find nothing new. Swamps crowned with perfect evergreens are the only land (that's Irish!) about here, and, of course, turn which way I will, the natural features of river and shore are the same. I do not weary of these most exquisite watery woods, but you will of my mention of them, I fear. Adieu.

DEAREST E——, — Since I last wrote to you I have been actually engaged in receiving and returning visits; for even to this *ultima thule* of all civilization do these polite usages extend. I have been called upon by several families residing in and about Darien, and rowed over in due form to acknowledge the honor. How shall I describe Darien to you? The abomination of desolation is but a poor type of its forlorn appearance, as, half buried in sand, its straggling, tumble-down wooden houses peer over the muddy bank of the thick slimy river. The whole town lies in a bed of sand: side-walks, or mid-walks, there be none distinct from each other; at every step I took my feet were ankle deep in the soil, and I had cause to rejoice that I was booted for the occasion. Our worthy doctor, whose lady I was going to visit, did nothing but regret that I had not allowed him to provide me a carriage, though the distance between his house and the landing is not a quarter of a mile. The magnitude of the exertion seemed to fill him with amazement, and he over and over again repeated how impossible it would be to prevail on any of the ladies there to take such a walk. The houses

seemed scattered about here and there, apparently without any design, and looked, for the most part, either unfinished or ruinous. One feature of the scene alone recalled the villages of New England—the magnificent oaks, which seemed to add to the meanness and insignificance of the human dwellings they overshadowed by their enormous size and grotesque forms. They reminded me of the elms of New Haven and Stockbridge. They are quite as large, and more picturesque, from their sombre foliage and the infinite variety of their forms—a beauty wanting in the New England elm, which invariably rises and spreads in a way which, though the most graceful in the world, at length palls on the capricious human eye, which seeks, above all other beauties, variety. Our doctor's wife is a New England woman; how can she live here? She had the fair eyes and hair, and fresh complexion of your part of the country, and its dearly beloved snuffle, which seemed actually dearly beloved when I heard it down here. She gave me some violets and narcissus, already blossoming profusely—in January—and expressed, like her husband, a thousand regrets at my having walked so far.

A transaction of the most amusing nature occurred to-day with regard to the resources of the Darien Bank, and the mode of carrying on business in that liberal and enlightened institution, the funds of which I should think quite incalculable—impalpable, certainly, they appeared by our experience this morning.

The river, as we came home, was covered with Ocone boxes. It is well for them they are so shallow-bottomed, for we rasped sand all the way home through the cut and in the shallows of the river.

I have been over the rice mill, under the guidance of the overseer and head man Frank, and have been made acquainted with the whole process of threshing the rice, which is extremely curious; and here I may again men-

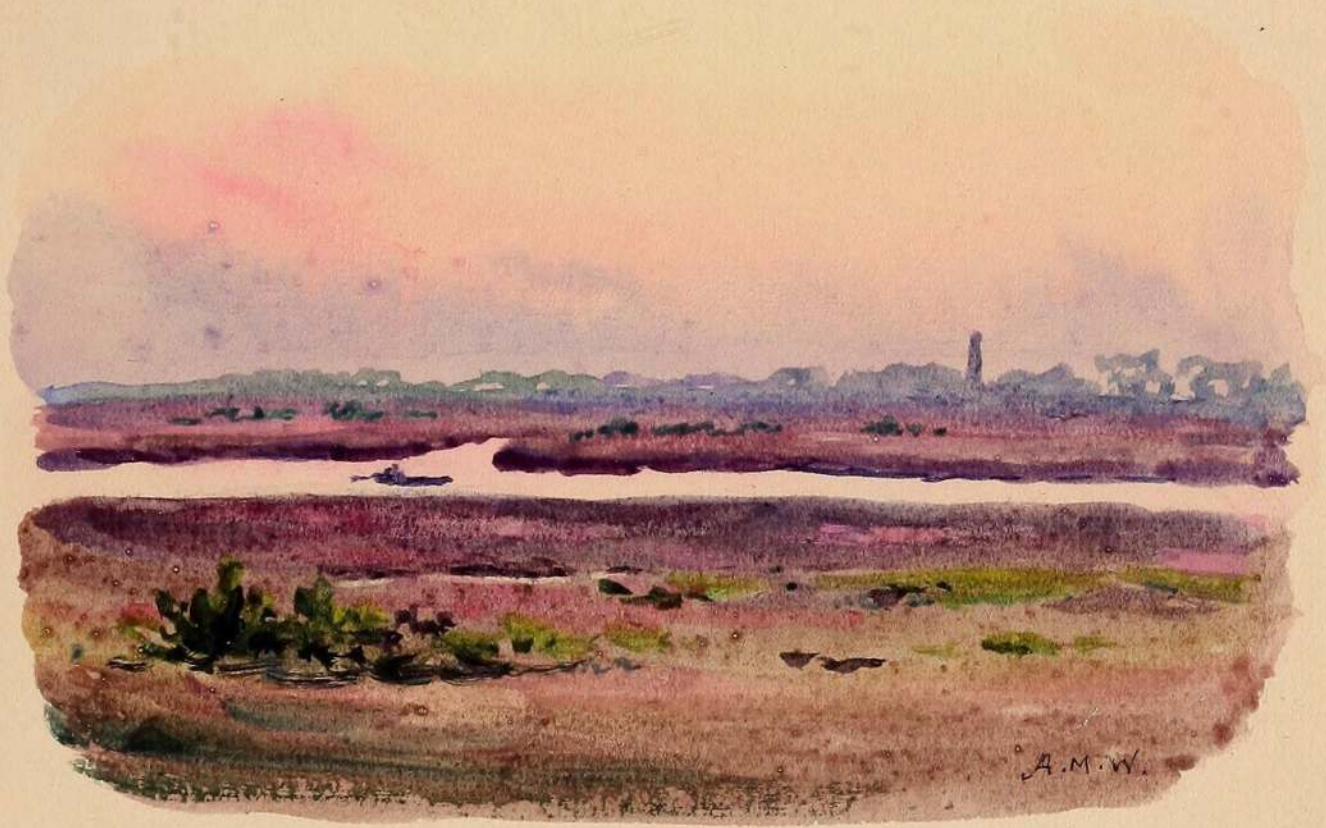
tion another statement of Miss Martineau's, which I am told is, and I should suppose, from what I see here, must be a mistake. She states that the chaff of the husks of the rice is used as a manure for the fields, whereas the people have to-day assured me that it is of so hard, stony, and untractable a nature as to be literally good for nothing. Here I know it is thrown away by cart-loads into the river, where its only use appears to be to act like ground-bait, and attract a vast quantity of small fish to its vicinity. The number of hands employed in this threshing mill is very considerable, and the whole establishment, comprising the fires, and boilers, and machinery of a powerful steam-engine, are all under negro superintendence and direction. After this survey I occupied myself with my infant plantation of evergreens round the dike, in the midst of which interesting pursuit I was interrupted by a visit from Mr. B——, a neighboring planter, who came to transact some business with Mr. —— about rice which he had sent to our mill to have threshed, and the price to be paid for such threshing. The negroes have presented a petition to-day that they may be allowed to have a ball in honor of our arrival, which demand has been acceded to, and furious preparations are being set on foot.

On visiting the Infirmary to-day, I was extremely pleased with the increased cleanliness and order observable in all the rooms. Two little filthy children, however, seemed to be still under the *ancien régime* of non-ablution; but upon my saying to the old nurse Molly, in whose ward they were, "Why, Molly, I don't believe you have bathed those children to-day," she answered, with infinite dignity, "Missis no b'lieve me wash um pickaninny! and yet she 'tress me wid all um niggars when 'em sick." The injured innocence and lofty conscious integrity of this speech silenced and abashed me; and yet I can't help it, but I don't believe to this present hour that those chil-

dren had had any experience of water, at least not washing water, since they first came into the world.

I rowed over to Darien again, to make some purchases, yesterday, and, inquiring the price of various articles, could not but wonder to find them at least three times as dear as in your Northern villages. The profits of these Southern shopkeepers (who for the most part are thoroughbred Yankees, with the true Yankee propensity to trade, no matter on how dirty a counter, or in what manner of wares) are enormous. The prices they ask for every thing, from colored calicoes for negro dresses to piano-fortes (one of which, for curiosity sake, I inquired the value of), are fabulous, and such as none but the laziest and most reckless people in the world would consent to afford. On our return we found the water in the cut so extremely low that we were obliged to push the boat through it, and did not accomplish it without difficulty. The banks of this canal, when they are thus laid bare, present a singular appearance enough—two walls of solid mud, through which matted, twisted, twined, and tangled, like the natural veins of wood, runs an everlasting net of indestructible roots, the thousand toes of huge cypress feet. The trees have been cut down long ago from the soil, but these fangs remain in the earth without decaying for an incredible space of time. This long endurance of immersion is one of the valuable properties of these cypress roots; but, though excellent binding stuff for the sides of a canal, they must be pernicious growth in any land used for cultivation that requires deep tillage. On entering the Altamaha, we found the tide so low that we were much obstructed by the sand-banks, which, but for their constant shifting, would presently take entire possession of this noble stream, and render it utterly impassable from shore to shore, as it already is in several parts of the channel at certain seasons of the tide. On landing,

I was seized hold of by a hideous old negress, named Sinda, who had come to pay me a visit, and of whom Mr. ——— told me a strange anecdote. She passed at one time for a prophetess among her fellow-slaves on the plantation, and had acquired such an ascendancy over them that, having given out, after the fashion of Mr. Miller, that the world was to come to an end at a certain time, and that not a very remote one, the belief in her assertion took such possession of the people on the estate that they refused to work, and the rice and cotton fields were threatened with an indefinite fallow in consequence of this strike on the part of the cultivators. Mr. K——, who was then overseer of the property, perceived the impossibility of arguing, remonstrating, or even flogging this solemn panic out of the minds of the slaves. The great final emancipation which they believed at hand had stripped even the lash of its prevailing authority, and the terrors of an overseer for once were as nothing, in the terrible expectation of the advent of the universal Judge of men. They were utterly impracticable; so, like a very shrewd man as he was, he acquiesced in their determination not to work; but he expressed to them his belief that Sinda was mistaken, and he warned her that if, at the appointed time, it proved so, she would be severely punished. I do not know whether he confided to the slaves what he thought likely to be the result if she was in the right; but poor Sinda was in the wrong. Her day of judgment came indeed, and a severe one it proved, for Mr. K—— had her tremendously flogged, and her end of things ended much like Mr. Miller's; but whereas he escaped unchanged in spite of his atrocious practices upon the fanaticism and credulity of his country people, the spirit of false prophecy was mercilessly scourged out of her, and the faith of her people of course reverted from her to the omnipotent lash again. Think what a dream that must have been



Butler's Island Beyond the Cut.



while it lasted for those infinitely oppressed people—freedom without entering it by the grim gate of death, brought down to them at once by the second coming of Christ, whose first advent has left them yet so far from it! Farewell; it makes me giddy to think of having been a slave while that delusion lasted and after it vanished.

DEAREST E——,—I received early this morning a visit from a young negro called Morris, who came to request permission to be baptized. The master's leave is necessary for this ceremony of acceptance into the bosom of the Christian Church; so all that can be said is, that it is to be hoped the rite itself may *not* be indispensable for salvation, as, if Mr. —— had thought proper to refuse Morris's petition, he must infallibly have been lost, in spite of his own best wishes to the contrary. I could not, in discoursing with him, perceive that he had any very distinct ideas of the advantages he expected to derive from the ceremony; but perhaps they appeared all the greater for being a little vague. I have seldom seen a more pleasing appearance than that of this young man; his figure was tall and straight, and his face, which was of a perfect oval, rejoiced in the grace, very unusual among his people, of a fine high forehead, and the much more frequent one of a remarkably gentle and sweet expression. He was, however, jet black, and certainly did not owe these personal advantages to any mixture in his blood. There is a certain African tribe from which the West Indian slave-market is chiefly recruited, who have these same characteristic features, and do not at all present the ignoble and ugly negro type, so much more commonly seen here. They are a tall, powerful people, with remarkably fine figures, regular features, and a singularly warlike and fierce disposition, in which respect they also differ

from the race of negroes existing on the American plantations. I do not think Morris, however, could have belonged to this tribe, though perhaps Othello did, which would at once settle the difficulties of those commentators who, abiding by Iago's very disagreeable suggestions as to his purely African appearance, are painfully compelled to forego the mitigation of supposing him a Moor and not a negro. Did I ever tell you of my dining in Boston, at the H——'s, on my first visit to that city, and sitting by Mr. John Quincy Adams, who, talking to me about Desdemona, assured me, with a most serious expression of sincere disgust, that he considered all her misfortunes as a very just judgment upon her for having married a "nigger?" I think, if some ingenious American actor of the present day, bent upon realizing Shakspeare's finest conceptions, with all the advantages of modern enlightenment, could contrive to slip in that opprobrious title, with a true South Carolinian anti-Abolitionist expression, it might really be made quite a point for Iago, as, for instance, in his first soliloquy—"I hate the nigger," given in proper Charleston or Savannah fashion, I am sure would tell far better than "I hate the Moor." Only think, E——, what a very new order of interest the whole tragedy might receive, acted throughout from this stand-point, as the Germans call it in this country, and called "Amalgamation, or the Black Bridal."

On their return from their walk this afternoon the children brought home some pieces of sugar-cane, of which a small quantity grows on the island. When I am most inclined to deplore the condition of the poor slaves on these cotton and rice plantations, the far more intolerable existence and harder labor of those employed on the sugar estates occurs to me, sometimes producing the effect of a lower circle in Dante's "Hell of Horrors," opening beneath the one where he seems to have reached the

climax of infernal punishment. You may have seen this vegetable, and must at any rate, I should think, be familiar with it by description. It is a long green reed, like the stalk of the maize, or Indian corn, only it shoots up to a much more considerable height, and has a consistent pith, which, together with the rind itself, is extremely sweet. The principal peculiarity of this growth, as perhaps you know, is that they are laid horizontally in the earth when they are planted for propagation, and from each of the notches or joints of the recumbent cane a young shoot is produced at the germinating season.

A very curious and interesting circumstance to me just now in the neighborhood is the projection of a canal, to be called the Brunswick Canal, which, by cutting through the lower part of the main land, toward the southern extremity of Great St. Simon's Island, is contemplated as a probable and powerful means of improving the prosperity of the town of Brunswick, by bringing it into immediate communication with the Atlantic. The scheme, which I think I have mentioned to you before, is, I believe, chiefly patronized by your States' folk—Yankee enterprise and funds being very essential elements, it appears to me, in all Southern projects and achievements. This speculation, however, from all I hear of the difficulties of the undertaking, from the nature of the soil, and the impossibility almost of obtaining efficient labor, is not very likely to arrive at any very satisfactory result; and, indeed, I find it hard to conceive how this part of Georgia can possibly produce a town which can be worth the digging of a canal, even to Yankee speculators. There is one feature of the undertaking, however, which more than all the others excites my admiration, namely, that Irish laborers have been advertised for to work upon the canal, and the terms offered them are twenty dollars a month per man and their board. Now these men will have for

fellow-laborers negroes who not only will receive nothing at all for their work, but who will be hired by the contractors and directors of the works from their masters, to whom they will hand over the price of their slaves' labor; while it will be the interest of the person hiring them not only to get as much work as possible out of them, but also to provide them as economically with food, combining the two praiseworthy endeavors exactly in such judicious proportions as not to let them neutralize each other. You will observe that this case of a master hiring out his slaves to another employer, from whom he receives their rightful wages, is a form of slavery which, though extremely common, is very seldom adverted to in those arguments for the system which are chiefly founded upon the master's presumed regard for his human property. People who have ever let a favorite house to the temporary occupation of strangers can form a tolerable idea of the difference between one's own regard and care of one's goods and chattels and that of the most conscientious tenant; and whereas I have not yet observed that ownership is a very effectual protection to the slaves against ill usage and neglect, I am quite prepared to admit that it is a vastly better one than the temporary interest which a lessee can feel in the live-stock he hires, out of whom it is his manifest interest to get as much, and into whom to put as little, as possible. Yet thousands of slaves throughout the Southern states are thus handed over by the masters who own them to masters who do not; and it does not require much demonstration to prove that their estate is not always the more gracious. Now you must not suppose that these same Irish free laborers and negro slaves will be permitted to work together at this Brunswick Canal. They say that this would be utterly impossible; for why? there would be tumults, and risings, and broken heads, and bloody bones, and all the

natural results of Irish intercommunion with their fellow-creatures, no doubt—perhaps even a little more riot and violence than merely comports with their usual habits of Milesian good fellowship; for, say the masters, the Irish hate the negroes more even than the Americans do, and there would be no bound to their murderous animosity if they were brought in contact with them on the same portion of the works of the Brunswick Canal. Doubtless there is some truth in this; the Irish laborers who might come hither would be apt enough, according to a universal moral law, to visit upon others the injuries they had received from others. They have been oppressed enough themselves to be oppressive whenever they have a chance; and the despised and degraded condition of the blacks, presenting to them a very ugly resemblance of their own home, circumstances naturally excite in them the exercise of the disgust and contempt of which they themselves are very habitually the objects; and that such circular distribution of wrongs may not only be pleasant, but have something like the air of retributive right to very ignorant folks, is not much to be wondered at. Certain is the fact, however, that the worst of all tyrants is the one who has been a slave; and, for that matter (and I wonder if the Southern slaveholders hear it with the same ear that I do, and ponder it with the same mind?), the command of one slave to another is altogether the most uncompromising utterance of insolent truculent despotism that it ever fell to my lot to witness or listen to. “You nigger—I say, you black nigger—you no hear me call you—what for you no run quick?” All this, dear E——, is certainly reasonably in favor of division of labor on the Brunswick Canal; but the Irish are not only quarrelers, and rioters, and fighters, and drinkers, and despisers of niggers—they are a passionate, impulsive, warm-hearted, generous people, much given to

powerful indignations, which break out suddenly when not compelled to smoulder sullenly—pestilent sympathizers too, and with a sufficient dose of American atmospheric air in their lungs, properly mixed with a right proportion of ardent spirits, there is no saying but what they might actually take to sympathy with the slaves, and I leave you to judge of the possible consequences. You perceive, I am sure, that they can by no means be allowed to work together on the Brunswick Canal.

I have been taking my daily walk round the island, and visited the sugar mill and the threshing mill again.

Mr. — has received another letter from Parson S— upon the subject of more church building in Darien. It seems that there has been a very general panic in this part of the slave states lately, occasioned by some injudicious missionary preaching, which was pronounced to be of a decidedly abolitionist tendency. The offensive preachers, after sowing God only knows what seed in this tremendous soil, where one grain of knowledge may spring up a gigantic upas-tree to the prosperity of its most unfortunate possessors, were summarily and ignominiously expelled; and now some shortsighted, uncomfortable Christians in these parts, among others this said Parson S—, are possessed with the notion that something had better be done to supply the want created by the cessation of these dangerous exhortations, to which the negroes have listened, it seems, with complacency. Parson S— seems to think that, having driven out two preachers, it might be well to build one church, where, at any rate, the negroes might be exhorted in a safe and salutary manner, “*qui ne leur donnerait point d'idées,*” as the French would say. Upon my word, E—, I used to pity the slaves, and I do pity them with all my soul; but, oh dear! oh dear! their case is a bed of roses to that of their owners, and I would go to the slave-block in Charleston to-morrow cheerfully

to be purchased if my only option was to go thither as a purchaser. I was looking over this morning, with a most indescribable mixture of feelings, a pamphlet published in the South upon the subject of the religious instruction of the slaves, and the difficulty of the task undertaken by these reconcilers of God and Mammon really seems to me nothing short of piteous. "We must give our involuntary servants" (they seldom call them slaves, for it is an ugly word in an American mouth, you know) "Christian enlightenment," say they; and where shall they begin? "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye also unto them?" No; but "Servants, obey your masters;" and there, I think, they naturally come to a full stop. This pamphlet forcibly suggested to me the necessity for a slave Church Catechism, and also, indeed, if it were possible, a slave Bible. If these heaven-blinded negro enlighteners persist in their pernicious plan of making Christians of their cattle, something of the sort must be done, or they will infallibly cut their own throats with this two-edged sword of truth, to which they should in no wise have laid their hand, and would not, doubtless, but that it is now thrust at them so threateningly that they have no choice. Again and again, how much I do pity them!

I have been walking to another cluster of negro huts, known as Number Two, and here we took a boat and rowed across the broad brimming Altamaha to a place called Woodville, on a part of the estate named Hammer-smith, though why that very thriving suburb of the great city of London should have been selected as the name of the lonely plank house in the midst of the pine woods which here enjoys that title I can not conceive, unless it was suggested by the contrast. This settlement is on the main land, and consists apparently merely of this house (to which the overseer retires when the poisonous malaria of the rice plantations compels him to withdraw from

it), and a few deplorably miserable hovels, which appeared to me to be chiefly occupied by the most decrepid and infirm samples of humanity it was ever my melancholy lot to behold.

The air of this pine barren is salubrious compared with that of the rice islands, and here some of the oldest slaves who will not die yet, and can not work any more, are sent, to go, as it were, out of the way. Remote recollections of former dealings with civilized human beings in the shape of masters and overseers seemed to me to be the only idea not purely idiotic in the minds of the poor old tottering creatures that gathered to stare with dim and blear eyes at me and my children.

There were two very aged women, who had seen different, and, to their faded recollections, better times, who spoke to me of Mr. ——'s grandfather, and of the early days of the plantation, when they were young and strong, and worked as their children and grandchildren were now working, neither for love nor yet for money. One of these old crones, a hideous, withered, wrinkled piece of womanhood, said that she had worked as long as her strength had lasted, and that then she had still been worth her keep, for, said she, "Missus, tho' we no able to work, we make little niggers for massa." Her joy at seeing her present owner was unbounded, and she kept clapping her horny hands together and exclaiming, "While there is life there is hope; we seen massa before we die." These demonstrations of regard were followed up by piteous complaints of hunger and rheumatism, and their usual requests for pittances of food and clothing, to which we responded by promises of additions in both kinds; and I was extricating myself as well as I could from my petitioners, with the assurance that I would come by-and-by and visit them again, when I felt my dress suddenly feebly jerked, and a shrill cracked voice on the other side of me exclaimed,

“Missus, no go yet—no go away yet; you no see me, missus, when you come by-and-by; but,” added the voice, in a sort of wail, which seemed to me as if the thought was full of misery, “you see many, many of my offspring.” These melancholy words, particularly the rather unusual one at the end of the address, struck me very much. They were uttered by a creature which *was* a woman, but looked like a crooked, ill-built figure set up in a field to scare crows, with a face infinitely more like a mere animal’s than any human countenance I ever beheld, and with that peculiar, wild, restless look of indefinite and, at the same time, intense sadness that is so remarkable in the countenance of some monkeys. It was almost with an effort that I commanded myself so as not to withdraw my dress from the yellow, crumpled, filthy claws that griped it, and it was not at last without the authoritative voice of the overseer that the poor creature released her hold of me.

We returned home certainly in the very strangest vehicle that ever civilized gentlewoman traveled in—a huge sort of cart, made only of some loose boards, on which I lay, supporting myself against one of the four posts which indicated the sides of my carriage; six horned creatures, cows or bulls, drew this singular equipage, and a yelping, howling, screaming, leaping company of half-naked negroes ran all round them, goading them with sharp sticks, frantically seizing hold of their tails, and inciting them by every conceivable and inconceivable encouragement to quick motion: thus, like one of the ancient Merovingian monarchs, I was dragged through the deep sand from the settlement back to the river, where we re-embarked for the island.

As we crossed the broad flood, whose turbid waters always look swollen as if by a series of freshets, a flight of birds sprang from the low swamp we were approaching, and literally, as it rose in the air, cast a shadow like that

of a cloud, which might be said, with but little exaggeration, to darken the sun for a few seconds. How well I remember my poor Aunt Whitelock describing such phenomena as of frequent occurrence in America, and the scornful incredulity with which we heard, without accepting, these legends of her Western experience! How little I then thought that I should have to cry peccavi to her memory from the bottom of such ruts, and under the shadow of such flights of winged creatures as she used to describe from the muddy ways of Pennsylvania and the muddy waters of Georgia.

The vegetation is already in an active state of demonstration, sprouting into lovely pale green and vivid red-brown buds and leaflets, though 'tis yet early in January.

After our return home we had a visit from Mr. C——, one of our neighbors, an intelligent and humane man, to whose account of the qualities and characteristics of the slaves, as he had observed and experienced them, I listened with great interest. The Brunswick Canal was again the subject of conversation, and again the impossibility of allowing the negroes and Irish to work in proximity was stated, and admitted as an indisputable fact. It strikes me with amazement to hear the hopeless doom of incapacity for progress pronounced upon these wretched slaves, when in my own country the very same order of language is perpetually applied to these very Irish, here spoken of as a sort of race of demigods by negro comparison. And it is most true that in Ireland nothing can be more savage, brutish, filthy, idle, and incorrigibly and hopelessly helpless and incapable than the Irish appear; and yet, transplanted to your Northern states, freed from the evil influences which surround them at home, they and their children become industrious, thrifty, willing to learn, able to improve, and forming, in the course of two generations, a most valuable accession to your laboring population.

How is it that it never occurs to these emphatical denouncers of the whole negro race that the Irish at home are esteemed much as they esteem their slaves, and that the sentence pronounced against their whole country by one of the greatest men of our age, an Irishman, was precisely that nothing could save, redeem, or regenerate Ireland unless, as a preparatory measure, the island were submerged and all its inhabitants drowned off?

I have had several women at the house to-day asking for advice and help for their sick children: they all came from No. 2, as they call it, that is, the settlement or cluster of negro huts nearest to the main one, where we may be said to reside. In the afternoon I went thither, and found a great many of the little children ailing: there had been an unusual mortality among them at this particular settlement this winter. In one miserable hut I heard that the baby was just dead; it was one of thirteen, many of whom had been, like itself, mercifully removed from the life of degradation and misery to which their birth appointed them; and whether it was the frequent repetition of similar losses, or an instinctive consciousness that death was indeed better than life for such children as theirs, I know not, but the father and mother, and old Rose, the nurse, who was their little baby's grandmother, all seemed apathetic, and apparently indifferent to the event. The mother merely repeated over and over again, "I've lost a many; they all goes so;" and the father, without word or comment, went out to his enforced labor.

As I left the cabin, rejoicing for them at the deliverance out of slavery of their poor child, I found myself suddenly surrounded by a swarm of young ragamuffins in every stage of partial nudity, clamoring from out of their filthy remnants of rags for donations of scarlet ribbon for the ball, which was to take place that evening. The melancholy scene I had just witnessed, and the still sadder re-

flection it had given rise to, had quite driven all thoughts of the approaching festivity from my mind; but the sudden demand for these graceful luxuries by Mr. ——'s half-naked dependents reminded me of the grotesque mask which life wears on one of its mysterious faces; and with as much sympathy for rejoicing as my late sympathy for sorrow had left me capable of, I procured the desired ornaments. I have considerable fellow-feeling for the passion for all shades of red which prevails among these dusky fellow-creatures of mine, a savage propensity for that same color in all its modifications being a tendency of my own.

At our own settlement (No. 1) I found every thing in a high fever of preparation for the ball. A huge boat had just arrived from the cotton plantation at St. Simon's, laden with the youth and beauty of that portion of the estate who had been invited to join the party; and the greetings among the arriviers and welcomers, and the heaven-defying combinations of color in the gala attire of both, surpass all my powers of description. The ball, to which of course we went, took place in one of the rooms of the Infirmary. As the room had, fortunately, but few occupants, they were removed to another apartment, and, without any very tender consideration for their not very remote, though invisible sufferings, the dancing commenced, and was continued. Oh, my dear E——, I have seen Jim Crow — the veritable James: all the contortions, and springs, and flings, and kicks, and capers you have been beguiled into accepting as indicative of him are spurious, faint, feeble, impotent — in a word, pale Northern reproductions of that ineffable black conception. It is impossible for words to describe the things these people did with their bodies, and, above all, with their faces, the whites of their eyes, and the whites of their teeth, and certain outlines which either naturally and by the grace of heaven,

or by the practice of some peculiar artistic dexterity, they bring into prominent and most ludicrous display. The languishing elegance of some—the painstaking laboriousness of others—above all, the feats of a certain enthusiastic banjo-player, who seemed to me to thump his instrument with every part of his body at once, at last so utterly overcame any attempt at decorous gravity on my part that I was obliged to secede; and, considering what the atmosphere was that we inhaled during the exhibition, it is only wonderful to me that we were not made ill by the double effort not to laugh, and, if possible, not to breathe.

Monday, 20th.

MY DEAREST E——, —A rather longer interval than usual has elapsed since I last wrote to you, but I must beg you to excuse it. I have had more than a usual amount of small daily occupations to fill my time; and, as a mere enumeration of these would not be very interesting to you, I will tell you a story which has just formed an admirable illustration for my observation of all the miseries of which this accursed system of slavery is the cause, even under the best and most humane administration of its laws and usages. Pray note it, my dear friend, for you will find, in the absence of all voluntary or even conscious cruelty on the part of the master, the best possible comment on a state of things which, without the slightest desire to injure and oppress, produces such intolerable results of injury and oppression.

We have, as a sort of under nursemaid and assistant of my dear M——, whose white complexion, as I wrote you, occasioned such indignation to my Southern fellow-travelers, and such extreme perplexity to the poor slaves on our arrival here, a much more orthodox servant for these

parts, a young woman named Psyche, but commonly called Sack, not a very graceful abbreviation of the divine heathen appellation: she can not be much over twenty, has a very pretty figure, a graceful, gentle deportment, and a face which, but for its color (she is a dingy mulatto), would be pretty, and is extremely pleasing, from the perfect sweetness of its expression; she is always serious, not to say sad and silent, and has always an air of melancholy and timidity, that has frequently struck me very much, and would have made me think some special anxiety or sorrow must occasion it, but that God knows the whole condition of these wretched people naturally produces such a deportment, and there is no necessity to seek for special or peculiar causes to account for it. Just in proportion as I have found the slaves on this plantation intelligent and advanced beyond the general brutish level of the majority, I have observed this pathetic expression of countenance in them, a mixture of sadness and fear, the involuntary exhibition of the two feelings, which I suppose must be the predominant experience of their whole lives, regret and apprehension, not the less heavy, either of them, for being, in some degree, vague and indefinite—a sense of incalculable past loss and injury, and a dread of incalculable future loss and injury.

I have never questioned Psyche as to her sadness, because, in the first place, as I tell you, it appears to me most natural, and is observable in all the slaves whose superior natural or acquired intelligence allows of their filling situations of trust or service about the house and family; and, though I can not and will not refuse to hear any and every tale of suffering which these unfortunates bring to me, I am anxious to spare both myself and them the pain of vain appeals to me for redress and help, which, alas! it is too often utterly out of my power to give them. It is useless, and, indeed, worse than useless, that they

should see my impotent indignation and unavailing pity, and hear expressions of compassion for them, and horror at their condition, which might only prove incentives to a hopeless resistance on their part to a system, under the hideous weight of whose oppression any individual or partial revolt must be annihilated and ground into the dust. Therefore, as I tell you, I asked Psyche no questions; but, to my great astonishment, the other day M—— asked me if I knew to whom Psyche belonged, as the poor woman had inquired of her with much hesitation and anguish if she could tell her who owned her and her children. She has two nice little children under six years old, whom she keeps as clean and tidy, and who are sad and as silent as herself. My astonishment at this question was, as you will readily believe, not small, and I forthwith sought out Psyche for an explanation. She was thrown into extreme perturbation at finding that her question had been referred to me, and it was some time before I could sufficiently reassure her to be able to comprehend, in the midst of her reiterated entreaties for pardon, and hopes that she had not offended me, that she did not know herself who owned her. She was, at one time, the property of Mr. K——, the former overseer, of whom I have already spoken to you, and who has just been paying Mr. —— a visit. He, like several of his predecessors in the management, has contrived to make a fortune upon it (though it yearly decreases in value to the owners, but this is the inevitable course of things in the Southern states), and has purchased a plantation of his own in Alabama, I believe, or one of the Southwestern states. Whether she still belonged to Mr. K—— or not she did not know, and entreated me, if she did, to endeavor to persuade Mr. —— to buy her. Now you must know that this poor woman is the wife of one of Mr. B——'s slaves, a fine, intelligent, active, excellent young man, whose whole family are

among some of the very best specimens of character and capacity on the estate. I was so astonished at the (to me) extraordinary state of things revealed by poor Sack's petition, that I could only tell her that I had supposed all the negroes on the plantation were Mr. ——'s property, but that I would certainly inquire, and find out for her, if I could, to whom she belonged, and if I could, endeavor to get Mr. —— to purchase her, if she really was not his.

Now, E——, just conceive for one moment the state of mind of this woman, believing herself to belong to a man who in a few days was going down to one of those abhorred and dreaded Southwestern states, and who would then compel her, with her poor little children, to leave her husband and the only home she had ever known, and all the ties of affection, relationship, and association of her former life, to follow him thither, in all human probability never again to behold any living creature that she had seen before; and this was so completely a matter of course that it was not even thought necessary to apprise her positively of the fact, and the only thing that interposed between her and this most miserable fate was the faint hope that Mr. —— *might have* purchased her and her children. But if he had, if this great deliverance had been vouchsafed to her, the knowledge of it was not thought necessary; and with this deadly dread at her heart she was living day after day, waiting upon me and seeing me, with my husband beside me, and my children in my arms in blessed security, safe from all separation but the one reserved in God's great providence for all His creatures. Do you think I wondered any more at the wo-begone expression of her countenance, or do you think it was easy for me to restrain within prudent and proper limits the expression of my feelings at such a state of things? And she had gone on from day to day enduring this agony, till I suppose its own intolerable pressure and

M——'s sweet countenance and gentle sympathizing voice and manner had constrained her to lay down this great burden of sorrow at our feet. I did not see Mr. —— until the evening; but, in the mean time, meeting Mr. O——, the overseer, with whom, as I believe I have already told you, we are living here, I asked him about Psyche, and who was her proprietor, when, to my infinite surprise, he told me that *he* had bought her and her children from Mr. K——, who had offered them to him, saying that they would be rather troublesome to him than otherwise down where he was going; "and so," said Mr. O——, "as I had no objection to investing a little money that way, I bought them." With a heart much lightened, I flew to tell poor Psyche the news, so that, at any rate, she might be relieved from the dread of any immediate separation from her husband. You can imagine better than I can tell you what her sensations were; but she still renewed her prayer that I would, if possible, induce Mr. —— to purchase her, and I promised to do so.

Early the next morning, while I was still dressing, I was suddenly startled by hearing voices in loud tones in Mr. ——'s dressing-room, which adjoins my bedroom, and the noise increasing until there was an absolute cry of despair uttered by some man. I could restrain myself no longer, but opened the door of communication and saw Joe, the young man, poor Psyche's husband, raving almost in a state of frenzy, and in a voice broken with sobs and almost inarticulate with passion, reiterating his determination never to leave this plantation, never to go to Alabama, never to leave his old father and mother, his poor wife and children, and dashing his hat, which he was wringing like a cloth in his hands, upon the ground, he declared he would kill himself if he was compelled to follow Mr. K——. I glanced from the poor wretch to Mr. ——, who was standing, leaning against a table with his

arms folded, occasionally uttering a few words of counsel to his slave to be quiet and not fret, and not make a fuss about what there was no help for. I retreated immediately from the horrid scene, breathless with surprise and dismay, and stood for some time in my own room, with my heart and temples throbbing to such a degree that I could hardly support myself. As soon as I recovered myself I again sought Mr. O——, and inquired of him if he knew the cause of poor Joe's distress. He then told me that Mr. ——, who is highly pleased with Mr. K——'s past administration of his property, wished, on his departure for his newly-acquired slave plantation, to give him some token of his satisfaction, and *had made him a present* of the man Joe, who had just received the intelligence that he was to go down to Alabama with his new owner the next day, leaving father, mother, wife, and children behind. You will not wonder that the man required a little judicious soothing under such circumstances, and you will also, I hope, admire the humanity of the sale of his wife and children by the owner who was going to take him to Alabama, because *they* would be encumbrances rather than otherwise down there. If Mr. K—— did not do this after he knew that the man was his, then Mr. —— gave him to be carried down to the South after his wife and children were sold to remain in Georgia. I do not know which was the real transaction, for I have not had the heart to ask; but you will easily imagine which of the two cases I prefer believing.

When I saw Mr. —— after this most wretched story became known to me in all its details, I appealed to him, for his own soul's sake, not to commit so great a cruelty. Poor Joe's agony while remonstrating with his master was hardly greater than mine while arguing with him upon this bitter piece of inhumanity—how I cried, and how I adjured, and how all my sense of justice, and of

mercy, and of pity for the poor wretch, and of wretchedness at finding myself implicated in such a state of things, broke in torrents of words from my lips and tears from my eyes! God knows such a sorrow at seeing any one I belonged to commit such an act was indeed a new and terrible experience to me, and it seemed to me that I was imploring Mr. —— to save himself more than to spare these wretches. He gave me no answer whatever, and I have since thought that the intemperate vehemence of my entreaties and expostulations perhaps deserved that he should leave me as he did without one single word of reply; and miserable enough I remained. Toward evening, as I was sitting alone, my children having gone to bed, Mr. O—— came into the room. I had but one subject in my mind; I had not been able to eat for it. I could hardly sit still for the nervous distress which every thought of these poor people filled me with. As he sat down looking over some accounts, I said to him, "Have you seen Joe this afternoon, Mr. O——?" (I give you our conversation as it took place.) "Yes, ma'am; he is a great deal happier than he was this morning." "Why, how is that?" asked I, eagerly. "Oh, he is not going to Alabama. Mr. K—— heard that he had kicked up a fuss about it (being in despair at being torn from one's wife and children is called *kicking up a fuss*; this is a sample of overseer appreciation of human feelings), and said that if the fellow wasn't willing to go with him, he did not wish to be bothered with any niggers down there who were to be troublesome, so he might stay behind." "And does Psyche know this?" "Yes, ma'am, I suppose so." I drew a long breath; and whereas my needle had stumbled through the stuff I was sewing for an hour before, as if my fingers could not guide it, the regularity and rapidity of its evolutions were now quite edifying. The man was for the present safe, and I remained silently ponder-

ing his deliverance and the whole proceeding, and the conduct of every one engaged in it, and, above all, Mr. ——'s share in the transaction, and I think, for the first time, almost a sense of horrible personal responsibility and implication took hold of my mind, and I felt the weight of an unimagined guilt upon my conscience; and yet, God knows, this feeling of self-condemnation is very gratuitous on my part, since when I married Mr. —— I knew nothing of these dreadful possessions of his, and even if I had I should have been much puzzled to have formed any idea of the state of things in which I now find myself plunged, together with those whose well-doing is as vital to me almost as my own.

With these agreeable reflections I went to bed. Mr. —— said not a word to me upon the subject of these poor people all the next day, and in the mean time I became very impatient of this reserve on his part, because I was dying to prefer my request that he would purchase Psyche and her children, and so prevent any future separation between her and her husband, as I supposed he would not again attempt to make a present of Joe, at least to any one who did not wish to be *bothered* with his wife and children. In the evening I was again with Mr. O—— alone in the strange, bare, wooden-walled sort of shanty which is our sitting-room, and revolving in my mind the means of rescuing Psyche from her miserable suspense, a long chain of all my possessions, in the shape of bracelets, necklaces, brooches, earrings, etc., wound in glittering procession through my brain, with many hypothetical calculations of the value of each separate ornament, and the very doubtful probability of the amount of the whole being equal to the price of this poor creature and her children; and then the great power and privilege I had foregone of earning money by my own labor occurred to me, and I think, for the first time in my life, my

past profession assumed an aspect that arrested my thoughts most seriously. For the last four years of my life that preceded my marriage I literally coined money, and never until this moment, I think, did I reflect on the great means of good, to myself and others, that I so gladly agreed to give up forever for a maintenance by the unpaid labor of slaves—people toiling not only unpaid, but under the bitter conditions the bare contemplation of which was then wringing my heart. You will not wonder that when, in the midst of such cogitations, I suddenly accosted Mr. O——, it was to this effect: “Mr. O——, I have a particular favor to beg of you. Promise me that you will never sell Psyche and her children without first letting me know of your intention to do so, and giving me the option of buying them.” Mr. O—— is a remarkably deliberate man, and squints, so that, when he has taken a little time in directing his eyes to you, you are still unpleasantly unaware of any result in which you are concerned; he laid down a book he was reading, and directed his head and one of his eyes toward me and answered, “Dear me, ma’am, I am very sorry—I have sold them.” My work fell down on the ground, and my mouth opened wide, but I could utter no sound, I was so dismayed and surprised; and he deliberately proceeded: “I didn’t know, ma’am, you see, at all, that you entertained any idea of making an investment of that nature; for I’m sure, if I had, I would willingly have sold the woman to you; but I sold her and her children this morning to Mr. ——.” My dear E——, though —— had resented my unmeasured upbraidings, you see they had not been without some good effect, and though he had, perhaps justly, punished my violent outbreak of indignation about the miserable scene I witnessed by not telling me of his humane purpose, he had bought these poor creatures, and so, I trust, secured them from any such misery in future. I

jumped up and left Mr. O—— still speaking, and ran to find Mr. ——, to thank him for what he had done, and with that will now bid you good-by. Think, E——, how it fares with slaves on plantations where there is no crazy Englishwoman to weep, and entreat, and implore, and upbraid for them, and no master willing to listen to such appeals.

DEAR E——,—There is one privilege which I enjoy here which I think few Cockneyesses have ever had experience of, that of hearing my own extemporaneous praises chanted bard-fashion by our negroes in rhymes as rude and to measures as simple as ever any illustrious female of the days of King Brian Boroihme listened to. Rowing yesterday evening through a beautiful sunset into a more beautiful moonrise, my two sable boatmen entertained themselves and me with alternate strophe and antistrophe of poetical description of my personal attractions, in which my “wire waist” recurred repeatedly, to my intense amusement. This is a charm for the possession of which M—— (my white nursemaid) is also invariably celebrated; and I suppose that the fine round natural proportions of the uncompressed waists of the sable beauties of these regions appear less symmetrical to eyes accustomed to them than our stay-cased figures, since “nothing pleaseth but rare accidents.” Occasionally I am celebrated in these rowing chants as “Massa’s darling,” and S—— comes in for endless glorification on account of the brilliant beauty of her complexion; the other day, however, our poets made a diversion from the personal to the moral qualities of their small mistress, and after the usual tribute to her roses and lilies came the following rather significant couplet:

“Little Missis Sally,
That’s a ruling lady.”

At which all the white teeth simultaneously lightened from the black visages, while the subject of this equivocal commendation sat with infantine solemnity (the profoundest, I think, that the human countenance is capable of), surveying her sable dependents with imperturbable gravity.

Yesterday morning I amused myself with an exercise of a talent I once possessed, but have so neglected that my performance might almost be called an experiment. I cut out a dress for one of the women. My education in France—where, in some important respects, I think girls are better trained than with us—had sent me home to England, at sixteen, an adept in the female mystery of needle-work. Not only owing to the Saturday’s discipline of clothes-mending by all the classes—while l’Abbé Millot’s history (of blessed boring memory) was being read aloud, to prevent “vain babblings,” and insure wholesome mental occupation the while—was I an expert patcher and mender, darner and piecer (darning and marking were my specialties), but the white cotton embroidery of which every French woman has always a piece under her hand *pour les momens perdus*, which are thus any thing but *perdus*, was as familiar to us as to the Irish cottagers of the present day, and cutting out and making my dresses was among the more advanced branches of *the* female accomplishment to which I attained.* The luxury of a lady’s

* Some of our great English ladies are, I know, exquisite needlewomen; but I do not think, in spite of these exceptional examples, that young English ladies of the higher classes are much skilled in this respect at the present day; and as for the democratic daughters of America, who for many reasons might be supposed likely to be well up in such housewifely lore, they are, for the most part, so ignorant of it that I have heard the most eloquent preacher of the city of New

maid of my own, indulged in ever since the days of my "coming out," has naturally enough caused my right hand to forget its cunning, and regret and shame at having lost any useful lore in my life made me accede, for my own sake, to the request of one of our multitudinous Dianas and innumerable Chloes to cut out dresses for each of them, especially as they (wonderful to relate) declared themselves able to stitch them if I would do the cutting. Since I have been on the plantation I have already spent considerable time in what the French call "confectioning" baby bundles, *i. e.*, the rough and very simple tiny habiliments of coarse cotton and scarlet flannel which form a baby's layette here, and of which I have run up some scores; but my present task was far more difficult. Chloe was an ordinary mortal negress enough, but Diana might have been the Huntress of the Woods herself, done into the African type. Tall, large, straight, well made, profoundly serious, she stood like a bronze statue, while I, mounted on a stool (the only way in which I could attain to the noble shoulders and bust of my lay figure), pinned and measured, and cut and shaped, under the superintendence of M——, and had the satisfaction of seeing the fine proportions of my black goddess quite becomingly clothed in a high, tight-fitting body of the gayest chintz, which she really contrived to put together quite creditably.

I was so elated with my own part of this performance

York advert to their incapacity in this respect as an impediment to their assistance of the poor, and ascribe to the fact that the daughters of his own parishioners did not know how to sew, the impossibility of their giving the most valuable species of help to the women of the needier classes, whose condition could hardly be more effectually improved than by acquiring such useful knowledge. I have known young American school-girls duly instructed in the nature of the parallaxes of the stars, but, as a rule, they do not know how to darn their stockings. Les Dames du Sacré Cœur do better for their high-born and well-bred pupils than this.

that I then and there determined to put into execution a plan I had long formed of endowing the little boat in which I take what the French call my walks on the water with cushions for the back and seat of the benches usually occupied by myself and Mr. ——; so, putting on my large straw hat, and plucking up a paper of pins, scissors, and my brown holland, I walked to the steps, and, jumping into the little canoe, began piecing, and measuring, and cutting the cushions, which were to be stuffed with the tree moss by some of the people who understand making a rough kind of mattress. My inanimate subject, however, proved far more troublesome to fit than my living lay figure, for the little cockle-shell ducked, and dived, and rocked, and tipped, and courtesied, and tilted, as I knelt first on one side and then on the other, fitting her, till I was almost in despair; however, I got a sort of pattern at last, and by dint of some pertinacious efforts—which, in their incompleteness, did not escape some sarcastic remarks from Mr. —— on the capabilities of “women of genius” applied to commonplace objects—the matter was accomplished, and the little Dolphin rejoiced in very tidy back and seat cushions, covered with brown holland, and bound with green serge. My ambition then began to contemplate an awning; but the boat being of the nature of a canoe—though not a real one, inasmuch as it is not made of a single log—does not admit of supports for such an edifice.

I had rather a fright the other day in that same small craft, into which I had taken S——, with the intention of paddling myself a little way down the river and back. I used to row tolerably well, and was very fond of it, and frequently here take an oar, when the men are rowing me in the long-boat, as some sort of equivalent for my riding, of which, of course, I am entirely deprived on this little dikeland of ours; but paddling is a perfectly different pro-

cess, and one that I was very anxious to achieve. My first strokes answered the purpose of sending the boat off from shore, and for a few minutes I got on pretty well; but presently I got tired of shifting the paddle from side to side, a manœuvre which I accomplished very clumsily and slowly, and yet, with all my precautions, not without making the boat tip perilously. The immense breadth and volume of the river suddenly seized my eyes and imagination as it were, and I began to fancy that if I got into the middle of the stream I should not be able to paddle myself back against it—which, indeed, might very well have proved the case. Then I became nervous, and paddled all on one side, by which means, of course, I only turned the boat round. S—— began to fidget about, getting up from where I had placed her, and terrifying me with her unsteady motions and the rocking of the canoe. I was now very much frightened, and saw that I *must* get back to shore before I became more helpless than I was beginning to feel; so, laying S—— down in the bottom of the boat as a preliminary precaution, I said to her with infinite emphasis, “Now lie still there, and don’t stir, or you’ll be drowned,” to which, with her clear gray eyes fixed on me, and no sign whatever of emotion, she replied deliberately, “I shall lie still here, and won’t stir, for I should not like to be drowned,” which, for an atom not four years old, was rather philosophical. Then I looked about me, and of course having drifted, set steadily to work and paddled home, with my heart in my mouth almost till we grazed the steps, and I got my precious freight safe on shore again, since which I have taken no more paddling lessons without my slave and master, Jack.

We have had a death among the people since I last wrote to you. A very valuable slave called Shadrach was seized with a disease which is frequent, and very apt to

be fatal here—peripneumonia; and, in spite of all that could be done to save him, sank rapidly, and died after an acute illness of only three days. The doctor came repeatedly from Darien, and the last night of the poor fellow's life—— himself watched with him. I suppose the general low diet of the negroes must produce some want of stamina in them; certainly, either from natural constitution or the effect of their habits of existence, or both, it is astonishing how much less power of resistance to disease they seem to possess than we do. If they are ill, the vital energy seems to sink immediately. This rice cultivation, too, although it does not affect them as it would whites—to whom, indeed, residence on the rice plantation after a certain season is impossible—is still, to a certain degree, deleterious even to the negroes. The proportion of sick is always greater here than on the cotton plantation, and the invalids of this place are not unfrequently sent down to St. Simon's to recover their strength, under the more favorable influences of the sea air and dry sandy soil of Hampton Point.

Yesterday afternoon the tepid warmth of the air and glassy stillness of the river seemed to me highly suggestive of fishing, and I determined, not having yet discovered what I could catch with what in these unknown waters, to try a little innocent paste bait—a mystery his initiation into which caused Jack much wonderment. The only hooks I had with me, however, had been bought in Darien—made, I should think, at the North expressly for this market; and so villainously bad were they, that, after trying them and my patience a reasonable time, I gave up the attempt and took a lesson in paddling instead. Among other items Jack told me of his own fishing experience was that he had more than once caught those most excellent creatures, Altamaha shad, by the fish themselves leaping out of the water and *landing*, as Jack expressed it, to

escape from the porpoises, which come in large schools up the river to a considerable distance, occasioning, evidently, much emotion in the bosoms of the legitimate inhabitants of these muddy waters. Coasting the island on our return home, we found a trap, which the last time we examined it was tenanted by a creature called a mink, now occupied by an otter. The poor beast did not seem pleased with his predicament; but the trap had been set by one of the drivers, and, of course, Jack would not have meddled with it except upon my express order, which, in spite of some pangs of pity for the otter, I did not like to give him, as, in the extremely few resources of either profit or pleasure possessed by the slaves, I could not tell at all what might be the value of an otter to his captor.

Yesterday evening the burial of the poor man Shadrach took place. I had been applied to for a sufficient quantity of cotton cloth to make a winding-sheet for him, and just as the twilight was thickening into darkness I went with Mr. — to the cottage of one of the slaves whom I may have mentioned to you before—a cooper of the name of London, the head of the religious party of the inhabitants of the island, a Methodist preacher of no small intelligence and influence among the people—who was to perform the burial service. The coffin was laid on trestles in front of the cooper's cottage, and a large assemblage of the people had gathered round, many of the men carrying pine-wood torches, the fitful glare of which glanced over the strange assembly, where every pair of large white-rimmed eyes turned upon — and myself; we two poor creatures, on this more solemn occasion, as well as on every other when these people encounter us, being the objects of admiration and wonderment, on which their gaze is immovably riveted. Presently the whole congregation uplifted their voices in a hymn, the first high wailing notes of which—sung all in unison, in the midst of these unwonted surroundings—



Sunset on the Altamaha

sent a thrill through all my nerves. When the chant ceased, Cooper London began a prayer, and all the people knelt down in the sand, as I did also. Mr. — alone remained standing in the presence of the dead man and of the living God to whom his slaves were now appealing. I can not tell you how profoundly the whole ceremony, if such it could be called, affected me; and there was nothing in the simple and pathetic supplication of the poor black artisan to check or interfere with the solemn influences of the whole scene. It was a sort of conventional Methodist prayer, and probably quite as conventional as all the rest was the closing invocation of God's blessing upon their master, their mistress, and our children; but this fairly overcame my composure, and I began to cry very bitterly; for these same individuals, whose implication in the state of things in the midst of which we are living, seemed to me as legitimate a cause for tears as for prayers. When the prayer was concluded we all rose, and, the coffin being taken up, proceeded to the people's burial-ground, when London read aloud portions of the funeral service from the Prayer-book — I presume the American Episcopal version of our Church service, for what he read appeared to be merely a selection from what was perfectly familiar to me; but whether he himself extracted what he uttered I did not inquire. Indeed, I was too much absorbed in the whole scene, and the many mingled emotions it excited of awe and pity, and an indescribable sensation of wonder at finding myself on this slave soil, surrounded by MY slaves, among whom again I knelt while the words proclaiming to the living and the dead the everlasting covenant of freedom, "I am the resurrection and the life," sounded over the prostrate throng, and mingled with the heavy flowing of the vast river sweeping, not far from where we stood, through the darkness by which we were now encompassed (beyond the

immediate circle of our torch-bearers). There was something painful to me in ——'s standing while we all knelt on the earth; for, though in any church in Philadelphia he would have stood during the praying of any minister, here I wished he would have knelt, to have given his slaves some token of his belief that—at least in the sight of that Master to whom we were addressing our worship—all men are equal. The service ended with a short address from London upon the subject of Lazarus, and the confirmation which the story of his resurrection afforded our hopes. The words were simple and rustic, and of course uttered in the peculiar sort of jargon which is the habitual negro speech; but there was nothing in the slightest degree incongruous or grotesque in the matter or manner, and the exhortations not to steal, or lie, or neglect to work well for massa, with which the glorious hope of immortality was blended in the poor slave preacher's closing address, was a moral adaptation, as wholesome as it was touching, of the great Christian theory to the capacities and consciences of his hearers. When the coffin was lowered the grave was found to be partially filled with water—naturally enough, for the whole island is a mere swamp, off which the Altamaha is only kept from sweeping by the high dikes all round it. This seemed to shock and distress the people, and for the first time during the whole ceremony there were sounds of crying and exclamations of grief heard among them. Their chief expression of sorrow, however, when Mr. —— and myself bade them good-night at the conclusion of the service, was on account of my crying, which appeared to affect them very much, many of them mingling with their "Farewell, good-night, massa and missis," affectionate exclamations of "God bless you, missis; don't cry!" "Lor, missis, don't you cry so!" Mr. —— declined the assistance of any of the torch-bearers home, and bade them all go quietly to their

quarters; and as soon as they had dispersed, and we had got beyond the fitful and unequal glaring of the torches, we found the shining of the stars in the deep blue lovely night sky quite sufficient to light our way along the dikes. I could not speak to ——, but continued to cry as we walked silently home; and, whatever his cogitations were, they did not take the usual form with him of wordy demonstration, and so we returned from one of the most striking religious ceremonies at which I ever assisted. Arrived at the door of the house, we perceived that we had been followed the whole way by the naked, noiseless feet of a poor half-witted creature, a female idiot, whose mental incapacity, of course, in no respect unfits her for the life of toil, little more intellectual than that of any beast of burden, which is her allotted portion here. Some small gratification was given to her, and she departed gibbering and muttering in high glee. Think, E——, of that man London, who, in spite of all the bitter barriers in his way, has learned to read, has read his Bible, teaches it to his unfortunate fellows, and is used by his owner and his owner's agents, for all these causes, as an effectual influence for good over the slaves of whom he is himself the despised and injured companion. Like them, subject to the driver's lash; like them, the helpless creature of his master's despotic will, without a right or a hope in this dreary world. But, though the light he has attained must show him the terrible aspects of his fate hidden by blessed ignorance from his companions, it reveals to him also other rights and other hopes — another world, another life — toward which he leads, according to the grace vouchsafed to him, his poor fellow-slaves. How can we keep this man in such a condition? How is such a cruel sin of injustice to be answered? Mr. ——, of course, sees and feels none of this as I do, and, I should think, must regret that he ever brought me here, to have my abhorrence of

the theory of slavery deepened, and strengthened every hour of my life, by what I see of its practice.

This morning I went over to Darien upon the very female errands of returning visits and shopping. In one respect (assuredly in none other) our life here resembles existence in Venice: we can never leave home for any purpose or in any direction but by boat—not, indeed, by gondola, but the sharp-cut, well-made light craft in which we take our walks on the water is a very agreeable species of conveyance. One of my visits this morning was to a certain Miss ——, whose rather grandiloquent name and very striking style of beauty exceedingly well became the daughter of an ex-governor of Georgia. As for the residence of this princess, it was like all the planters' residences that I have seen, and such as a well-to-do English farmer would certainly not inhabit. Occasional marks of former elegance or splendor survive sometimes in the size of the rooms, sometimes in a little carved woodwork about the mantel-pieces or wainscotings of these mansions; but all things have a Castle Rackrent air of neglect, and dreary, careless untidiness, with which the dirty, barefooted negro servants are in excellent keeping. Occasionally a huge pair of dazzling shirt-gills, out of which a black visage grins as out of some vast white paper cornet, adorns the sable footman of the establishment, but unfortunately without at all necessarily indicating any downward prolongation of the garment; and the perfect tulip-bed of a head-handkerchief with which the female attendants of these "great families" love to bedizen themselves frequently stands them instead of every other most indispensable article of female attire.

As for my shopping, the goods, or rather "bads," at which I used to grumble, in your village emporium at Lenox, are what may be termed "first rate," both in excellence and elegance, compared with the vile products of

every sort which we wretched Southerners are expected to accept as the conveniences of life in exchange for current coin of the realm. I regret to say, moreover, that all these infamous articles are Yankee made—expressly for this market, where every species of *thing* (to use the most general term I can think of), from list shoes to piano-fortes, is procured from the North—almost always New England, utterly worthless of its kind, and dearer than the most perfect specimens of the same articles would be any where else. The incredible variety and ludicrous combinations of goods to be met with in one of these Southern shops beats the stock of your village omnium-gatherum hollow: to be sure, one class of articles, and that probably the most in demand here, is not sold over any counter in Massachusetts—cowhides and man-traps, of which a large assortment enters necessarily into the furniture of every Southern shop.

In passing to-day along the deep sand road calling itself the street of Darien, my notice was attracted by an extremely handsome and intelligent-looking poodle, standing by a little wizen-looking knife-grinder, whose features were evidently European, though he was nearly as black as a negro, who, strange to say, was discoursing with him in very tolerable French. The impulse of curiosity led me to accost the man at the grindstone, when his companion immediately made off. The itinerant artisan was from Aix, in Provence: think of wandering thence to Darien in Georgia! I asked him about the negro who was talking to him; he said he knew nothing of him but that he was a slave belonging to somebody in the town. And upon my expressing surprise at his having left his own beautiful and pleasant country for this dreary distant region, he answered, with a shrug and a smile, “Oui, madame, c’est vrai; c’est un joli pays, mais dans ce pays-là, quand un homme n’a rien, c’est rien pour toujours.” A property

which many, no doubt, have come hither, like the little French knife-grinder, to increase, without succeeding in the struggle much better than he appeared to have done.

DEAR E——,—Having made a fresh, and, as I thought, more promising purchase of fishing-tackle, Jack and I betook ourselves to the river, and succeeded in securing some immense catfish, of which, to tell you the truth, I am most horribly afraid when I have caught them. The dexterity necessary for taking them off the hook so as to avoid the spikes on their backs, and the spikes on each side of their gills, the former having to be pressed down, and the two others pressed up, before you can get any purchase on the slimy beast (for it is smooth skinned and without scales, to add to the difficulty)—these conditions, I say, make the catching of catfish questionable sport. Then, too, they hiss, and spit, and swear at one, and are altogether devilish in their aspect and demeanor; nor are they good for food, except, as Jack with much humility said this morning, for colored folks—“Good for colored folks, missis; me ’spect not good enough for white people.” That ’spect, meaning *expect*, has sometimes a possible meaning of *suspect*, which would give the sentence in which it occurs a very humorous turn, and I always take the benefit of that interpretation. After exhausting the charms of our occupation, finding that catfish were likely to be our principal haul, I left the river and went my rounds to the hospitals. On my way I encountered two batches of small black fry, Hannah’s children and poor Psyche’s children, looking really as neat and tidy as children of the bettermost class of artisans among ourselves. These people are so quick and so imitative that it would be the easiest thing in the world to improve their physical condition by appealing to their emulative propensities.

Their passion for what is *genteel* might be used most advantageously in the same direction; and, indeed, I think it would be difficult to find people who offered such a fair purchase by so many of their characteristics to the hand of the reformer.

Returning from the hospital, I was accosted by poor old Teresa, the wretched negress who had complained to me so grievously of her back being broken by hard work and childbearing. She was in a dreadful state of excitement, which she partly presently communicated to me, because she said Mr. O—— had ordered her to be flogged for having complained to me as she did. It seems to me that I have come down here to be tortured, for this punishing these wretched creatures for crying out to me for help is really converting me into a source of increased misery to them. It is almost more than I can endure to hear these horrid stories of lashings inflicted because I have been invoked; and though I dare say Mr. ——, thanks to my passionate appeals to him, gives me little credit for prudence or self-command, I have some, and I exercise it, too, when I listen to such tales as these with my teeth set fast and my lips closed. Whatever I may do to the master, I hold my tongue to the slaves, and I wonder how I do it.

In the afternoon I rowed with Mr. —— to another island in the broad waters of the Altamaha, called Tunno's Island, to return the visit of a certain Dr. T——, the proprietor of the island, named after him, as our rice swamp is after Major ——. I here saw growing in the open air the most beautiful gardenias I ever beheld; the branches were as high and as thick as the largest clumps of *kalmia* that grow in your woods; but whereas the tough, stringy, fibrous branches of these gives them a straggling appearance, these magnificent masses of dark, shiny, glossy green leaves were quite compact, and I can not conceive any thing lovelier or more delightful than they would be

starred all over with their thick-leaved, cream-white odoriferous blossoms.

In the course of our visit a discussion arose as to the credibility of any negro assertion, though, indeed, that could hardly be called a discussion that was simply a chorus of assenting opinions. No negro was to be believed on any occasion or any subject. No doubt they are habitual liars, for they are slaves; but there are some thrice honorable exceptions, who, being slaves, are yet not liars; and certainly the vice results much more from the circumstances in which they are placed than from any natural tendency to untruth in their case. The truth is that they are always considered as false and deceitful, and it is very seldom that any special investigation of the facts of any particular case is resorted to in their behalf. They are always prejudged on their supposed general characteristics, and never judged after the fact on the merit of any special instance.

A question which was discussed in the real sense of the term was that of plowing the land instead of having it turned with the spade or hoe. I listened to this with great interest, for Jack and I had had some talk upon this subject, which began in his ardently expressed wish that massa would allow his land to be plowed, and his despairing conclusion that he never would, "'cause horses more costly to keep than colored folks," and plowing, therefore, dearer than hoeing or digging. I had ventured to suggest to Mr. — the possibility of plowing some of the fields on the island, and his reply was that the whole land was too moist, and too much interrupted with the huge masses of the cypress yam roots, which would turn the share of any plow; yet there is land belonging to our neighbor Mr. G——, on the other side of the river, where the conditions of the soil must be precisely the same, and yet which is being plowed before our faces.

On Mr. ——'s adjacent plantation the plow is also used extensively and successfully.

On my return to our own island I visited another of the hospitals, and the settlements to which it belonged. The condition of these places and of their inhabitants is, of course, the same all over the plantation, and if I were to describe them I should but weary you with a repetition of identical phenomena: filthy, wretched, almost naked, always barelegged and barefooted children; negligent, ignorant, wretched mothers, whose apparent indifference to the plight of their offspring, and utter incapacity to alter it, are the inevitable result of their slavery. It is hopeless to attempt to reform their habits or improve their condition while the women are condemned to field labor; nor is it possible to overestimate the bad moral effect of the system as regards the women entailing this enforced separation from their children, and neglect of all the cares and duties of mother, nurse, and even housewife, which are all merged in the mere physical toil of a human hoeing machine. It seems to me too—but upon this point I can not, of course, judge as well as the persons accustomed to and acquainted with the physical capacities of their slaves—that the labor is not judiciously distributed in many cases—at least not as far as the women are concerned. It is true that every able-bodied woman is made the most of in being driven afield as long as, under all and any circumstances, she is able to wield a hoe; but, on the other hand, stout, hale, hearty girls and boys, of from eight to twelve and older, are allowed to lounge about, filthy and idle, with no pretense of an occupation but what they call “tend baby,” *i. e.*, see to the life and limbs of the little slave infants, to whose mothers, working in distant fields, they carry them during the day to be suckled, and for the rest of the time leave them to crawl and kick in the filthy cabins or on the broiling sand

which surrounds them, in which industry, excellent enough for the poor babies, these big lazy youths and lasses emulate them. Again, I find many women who have borne from five to ten children rated as workers, precisely as young women in the prime of their strength who have had none; this seems a cruel carelessness. To be sure, while the women are pregnant their task is diminished, and this is one of the many indirect inducements held out to reckless propagation, which has a sort of premium offered to it in the consideration of less work and more food, counterbalanced by none of the sacred responsibilities which hallow and ennoble the relation of parent and child; in short, as their lives are for the most part those of mere animals, their increase is literally mere animal breeding, to which every encouragement is given, for it adds to the master's live-stock and the value of his estate.

DEAR E——,—To-day I have the pleasure of announcing to you a variety of improvements about to be made in the Infirmary of the island. There is to be a third story—a mere loft, indeed—added to the building; but, by affording more room for the least distressing cases of sickness to be drafted off into, it will leave the ground floor and room above it comparatively free for the most miserable of these unfortunates. To my unspeakable satisfaction, these destitute apartments are to be furnished with bedsteads, mattresses, pillows, and blankets; and I feel a little comforted for the many heartaches my life here inflicts upon me—at least some of my twinges will have wrought this poor alleviation of their wretchedness for the slaves when prostrated by disease or pain.

I had hardly time to return from the hospital home this morning before one of the most tremendous storms I ever saw burst over the island. Your Northern hills, with their

solemn pine woods, and fresh streams and lakes, telling of a cold rather than a warm climate, always seem to me as if undergoing some strange and unnatural visitation when one of your heavy summer thunder-storms bursts over them. Snow and frost, hail and, above all, wind, trailing rain-clouds and brilliant northern lights, are your appropriate sky phenomena; here, thunder and lightning seem as if they might have been invented. Even in winter (remember, we are now in February) they appear neither astonishing nor unseasonable, and I should think in summer (but Heaven defend me from ever making good my supposition) lightning must be as familiar to these sweltering lands and slimy waters as sunlight itself.

The afternoon cleared off most beautifully, and Jack and I went out on the river to catch what might be caught. Jack's joyful excitement was extreme at my announcing to him the fact that Mr. — had consented to try plowing on some of the driest portions of the island instead of the slow and laborious process of hoeing the fields; this is a disinterested exultation on his part, for, at any rate, as long as I am here, he will certainly be nothing but "my boy Jack," and I should think, after my departure, will never be degraded to the rank of a field-hand or common laborer. Indeed, the delicacy of his health, to which his slight, slender figure and languid face bear witness, and which was one reason of his appointment to the eminence of being "my slave," would, I should think, prevent the poor fellow's ever being a very robust or useful working animal.

On my return from the river I had a long and painful conversation with Mr. — upon the subject of the flogging which had been inflicted on the wretched Teresa. These discussions are terrible: they throw me into perfect agonies of distress for the slaves, whose position is utterly hopeless; for myself, whose intervention in their behalf

sometimes seems to me worse than useless; for Mr. —, whose share in this horrible system fills me by turns with indignation and pity. But, after all, what can he do? how can he help it all? Moreover, born and bred in America, how should he care or wish to help it? and, of course, he does not; and I am in despair that he does not: et voilà, it is a happy and hopeful plight for us both. He maintained that there had been neither hardship nor injustice in the case of Teresa's flogging; and that, moreover, she had not been flogged at all for complaining to me, but simply because her allotted task was not done at the appointed time. Of course this was the result of her having come to appeal to me instead of going to her labor; and as she knew perfectly well the penalty she was incurring, he maintained that there was neither hardship nor injustice in the case; the whole thing was a regularly established law, with which all the slaves were perfectly well acquainted; and this case was no exception whatever. The circumstance of my being on the island could not, of course, be allowed to overthrow the whole system of discipline established to secure the labor and obedience of the slaves; and if they chose to try experiments as to that fact, they and I must take the consequences. At the end of the day, the driver of the gang to which Teresa belongs reported her work not done, and Mr. O—— ordered him to give her the usual number of stripes, which order the driver of course obeyed, without knowing how Teresa had employed her time instead of hoeing. But Mr. O—— knew well enough, for the wretched woman told me that she had herself told him she should appeal to me about her weakness, and suffering, and inability to do the work exacted from her.

He did not, however, think proper to exceed in her punishment the usual number of stripes allotted to the non-performance of the appointed daily task, and Mr. —

pronounced the whole transaction perfectly satisfactory and *en règle*. The common drivers are limited in their powers of chastisement, not being allowed to administer more than a certain number of lashes to their fellow-slaves. Head man Frank, as he is called, has alone the privilege of exceeding this limit; and the overseer's latitude of infliction is only curtailed by the necessity of avoiding injury to life or limb. The master's irresponsible power has no such bound. When I was thus silenced on the particular case under discussion, I resorted, in my distress and indignation, to the abstract question, as I never can refrain from doing; and to Mr. ——'s assertion of the justice of poor Teresa's punishment, I retorted the manifest injustice of unpaid and enforced labor; the brutal inhumanity of allowing a man to strip and lash a woman, the mother of ten children; to exact from her toil which was to maintain in luxury two idle young men, the owners of the plantation. I said I thought female labor of the sort exacted from these slaves, and corporal chastisement such as they endure, must be abhorrent to any manly or humane man. Mr. —— said he thought it was *disagreeable*, and left me to my reflections with that concession. My letter has been interrupted for the last three days—by nothing special, however. My occupations and interests here, of course, know no change; but Mr. —— has been anxious for a little while past that we should go down to St. Simon's, the cotton plantation.

We shall suffer less from the heat, which I am beginning to find oppressive on this swamp island; and he himself wished to visit that part of his property, whither he had not yet been since our arrival in Georgia; so the day before yesterday he departed to make the necessary arrangements for our removal thither; and my time in the mean while has been taken up in fitting him out for his departure.

In the morning Jack and I took our usual paddle, and, having the tackle on board, tried fishing. I was absorbed in many sad and serious considerations, and, wonderful to relate (for you know, ——, how keen an angler I am), had lost all consciousness of my occupation until, after I know not how long a time elapsing without the shadow of a nibble, I was recalled to a most ludicrous perception of my ill success by Jack's sudden observation, "Missis, fishing berry good fun when um fish bite." This settled the fishing for that morning, and I let Jack paddle me down the broad turbid stream, endeavoring to answer in the most comprehensible manner to his keen but utterly undeveloped intellects the innumerable questions with which he plied me about Philadelphia, about England, about the Atlantic, etc. He dilated much upon the charms of St. Simon's, to which he appeared very glad that we were going; and, among other items of description, mentioned what I was very glad to hear, that it was a beautiful place for riding, and that I should be able to indulge to my heart's content in my favorite exercise, from which I have, of course, been utterly debarred in this small dikeland of ours. He insinuated more than once his hope and desire that he might be allowed to accompany me, but as I knew nothing at all about his capacity for equestrian exercises, or any of the arrangements that might or might not interfere with such a plan, I was discreetly silent, and took no notice of his most comically turned hints on the subject. In our row we started a quantity of wild duck, and he told me there was a great deal of game at St. Simon's, but that the people did not contrive to catch much, though they laid traps constantly for it. Of course their possessing fire-arms is quite out of the question; but this abundance of what must be to them such especially desirable prey makes the fact a great hardship. I almost wonder they don't learn to shoot like savages with

bows and arrows; but these would be weapons, and equally forbidden them.

In the afternoon I saw Mr. —— off for St. Simon's; it is fifteen miles lower down the river, and a large island at the very mouth of the Altamaha.

The boat he went in was a large, broad, rather heavy, though well-built craft, by no means as swift or elegant as the narrow eight-oared long-boat in which he generally takes his walks on the water, but well adapted for the traffic between the two plantations, where it serves the purpose of a sort of omnibus or stage-coach for the transfer of the people from one to the other, and of a baggage-wagon or cart for the conveyance of all sorts of household goods, chattels, and necessaries. Mr. —— sat in the middle of a perfect chaos of such freight; and as the boat pushed off, and the steersman took her into the stream, the men at the oars set up a chorus, which they continued to chant in unison with each other, and in time with their stroke, till the voices and oars were heard no more from the distance. I believe I have mentioned to you before the peculiar characteristics of this veritable negro minstrelsy—how they all sing in unison, having never, it appears, attempted or heard any thing like part-singing. Their voices seem oftener tenor than any other quality, and the tune and time they keep something quite wonderful; such truth of intonation and accent would make almost any music agreeable. That which I have heard these people sing is often plaintive and pretty, but almost always has some resemblance to tunes with which they must have become acquainted through the instrumentality of white men; their overseers or masters whistling Scotch or Irish airs, of which they have produced by ear these *rifacciamenti*. The note for note reproduction of “Ah! vous dirai-je, maman?” in one of the most popular of the so-called negro melodies with which all America and En-

gland are familiar, is an example of this very transparent plagiarism; and the tune with which Mr. ——'s rowers started him down the Altamaha, as I stood at the steps to see him off, was a very distinct descendant of "Coming through the Rye." The words, however, were astonishingly primitive, especially the first line, which, when it burst from their eight throats in high unison, sent me into fits of laughter.

"Jenny shake her toe at me,
 Jenny gone away;
 Jenny shake her toe at me,
 Jenny gone away.
 Hurrah! Miss Susy, oh!
 Jenny gone away;
 Hurrah! Miss Susy, oh!
 Jenny gone away."

What the obnoxious Jenny meant by shaking her toe, whether defiance or mere departure, I never could ascertain, but her going away was an unmistakable subject of satisfaction; and the pause made on the last "oh!" before the final announcement of her departure, had really a good deal of dramatic and musical effect. Except the extemporaneous chants in our honor, of which I have written to you before, I have never heard the negroes on Mr. ——'s plantation sing any words that could be said to have any sense. To one, an extremely pretty, plaintive, and original air, there was but one line, which was repeated with a sort of wailing chorus—

"Oh! my massa told me, there's no grass in Georgia."

Upon inquiring the meaning of which, I was told it was supposed to be the lamentation of a slave from one of the more northerly states, Virginia or Carolina, where the labor of hoeing the weeds, or grass as they call it, is not nearly so severe as here, in the rice and cotton lands of

Georgia. Another very pretty and pathetic tune began with words that seemed to promise something sentimental—

“Fare you well, and good-by, oh, oh!
I’m goin’ away to leave you, oh, oh!”

but immediately went off into nonsense verses about gentlemen in the parlor drinking wine and cordial, and ladies in the drawing-room drinking tea and coffee, etc. I have heard that many of the masters and overseers on these plantations prohibit melancholy tunes or words, and encourage nothing but cheerful music and senseless words, deprecating the effect of sadder strains upon the slaves, whose peculiar musical sensibility might be expected to make them especially excitable by any songs of a plaintive character, and having any reference to their particular hardships. If it is true, I think it a judicious precaution enough—these poor slaves are just the sort of people over whom a popular musical appeal to their feelings and passions would have an immense power.

In the evening, Mr. ——’s departure left me to the pleasures of an uninterrupted *tête-à-tête* with his cross-eyed overseer, and I endeavored, as I generally do, to atone by my conversibleness and civility for the additional trouble which, no doubt, all my outlandish ways and notions are causing the worthy man. So suggestive (to use the new-fangled jargon about books) a woman as myself is, I suspect, an intolerable nuisance in these parts; and poor Mr. O—— can not very well desire Mr. —— to send me away, however much he may wish that he would; so that figuratively, as well as literally, I fear the worthy master *me voit d’un mauvais œil*, as the French say. I asked him several questions about some of the slaves who had managed to learn to read, and by what means they had been able to do so. As teaching them is strictly prohibited by the laws, they who instructed them, and such of them as

acquired the knowledge, must have been not a little determined and persevering. This was my view of the case, of course, and of course it was not the overseer's. I asked him if many of Mr. ——'s slaves could read. He said "No; very few, he was happy to say, but those few were just so many too many." "Why, had he observed any insubordination in those who did?" And I reminded him of Cooper London, the Methodist preacher, whose performance of the burial service had struck me so much some time ago, to whose exemplary conduct and character there is but one concurrent testimony all over the plantation. No; he had no special complaint to bring against the lettered members of his subject community, but he spoke by anticipation. Every step they take toward intelligence and enlightenment lessens the probability of their acquiescing in their condition. Their condition is not to be changed—ergo, they had better not learn to read; a very succinct and satisfactory argument as far as it goes, no doubt, and one to which I had not a word to reply, at any rate, to Mr. O——, as I did not feel called upon to discuss the abstract justice or equity of the matter with him; indeed he, to a certain degree, gave up that part of the position, starting with "I don't say whether it's right or wrong;" and in all conversations that I have had with the Southerners upon these subjects, whether out of civility to what may be supposed to be an Englishwoman's prejudices, or a forlorn respect to their own convictions, the question of the fundamental wrong of slavery is generally admitted, or, at any rate, certainly never denied. That part of the subject is summarily dismissed, and all its other aspects vindicated, excused, and even lauded, with untiring eloquence. Of course, of the abstract question I could judge before I came here, but I confess I had not the remotest idea how absolutely my observation of every detail of the system, as a practical in-

iquity, would go to confirm my opinion of its abomination. Mr. O—— went on to condemn and utterly denounce all the preaching, and teaching, and moral instruction upon religious subjects which people in the South, pressed upon by Northern opinion, are endeavoring to give their slaves. The kinder and the more cowardly masters are anxious to evade the charge of keeping their negroes in brutish ignorance, and so they crumble what they suppose and hope may prove a little harmless religious enlightenment, which, mixed up with much religious authority on the subject of submission and fidelity to masters, they trust their slaves may swallow without its doing them any harm—*i. e.*, that they may be better Christians and better slaves—and so, indeed, no doubt they are; but it is a very dangerous experiment, and from Mr. O——'s point of view I quite agree with him. The letting out of water, or the letting in of light, in infinitesimal quantities, is not always easy. The half-wicked of the earth are the leaks through which wickedness is eventually swamped; compromises forerun absolute surrender in most matters, and fools and cowards are, in such cases, the instruments of Providence for their own defeat. Mr. O—— stated unequivocally his opinion that free labor would be more profitable on the plantations than the work of slaves, which, being compulsory, was of the worst possible quality and the smallest possible quantity; then the charge of them before and after they are able to work is onerous, the cost of feeding and clothing them very considerable, and, upon the whole, he, a Southern overseer, pronounced himself decidedly in favor of free labor, upon grounds of expediency. Having at the beginning of our conversation declined discussing the moral aspect of slavery, evidently not thinking that position tenable, I thought I had every right to consider Mr. ——'s slave-driver a decided Abolitionist.

I had been anxious to enlist his sympathies on behalf

of my extreme desire to have some sort of garden, but did not succeed in inspiring him with my enthusiasm on the subject; he said there was but one garden that he knew of in the whole neighborhood of Darien, and that was our neighbor, old Mr. C——'s, a Scotchman on St. Simon's. I remembered the splendid gardenias on Tunno's Island, and referred to them as a proof of the material for ornamental gardening. He laughed, and said rice and cotton crops were the ornamental gardening principally admired by the planters, and that, to the best of his belief, there was not another decent kitchen or flower garden in the state but the one he had mentioned.

The next day after this conversation, I walked with my horticultural zeal much damped, and wandered along the dike by the broad river, looking at some pretty peach-trees in blossom, and thinking what a curse of utter stagnation this slavery produces, and how intolerable to me a life passed within its stifling influence would be. Think of peach-trees in blossom in the middle of February! It does seem cruel, with such a sun and soil, to be told that a garden is worth nobody's while here; however, Mr. O—— said that he believed the wife of the former overseer had made a "sort of a garden" at St. Simon's. We shall see "what sort" it turns out to be. While I was standing on the dike, ruminating above the river, I saw a beautiful white bird of the crane species alight not far from me. I do not think a little knowledge of natural history would diminish the surprise and admiration with which I regard the, to me, unwonted specimens of animal existence that I encounter every day, and of which I do not even know the names. Ignorance is an odious thing. The birds here are especially beautiful, I think. I saw one the other day, of what species of course I do not know, of a warm and rich brown, with a scarlet hood and crest—a lovely creature, about the size of your Northern robin, but more elegantly shaped.

This morning, instead of my usual visit to the Infirmary, I went to look at the work and workers in the threshing mill: all was going on actively and orderly under the superintendence of head man Frank, with whom, and a very sagacious clever fellow who manages the steam power of the mill, and is honorably distinguished as Engineer Ned, I had a small chat. There is one among various drawbacks to the comfort and pleasure of our intercourse with these colored "men and brethren," at least in their slave condition, which certainly exercises my fortitude not a little—the swarms of fleas that cohabit with these sable dependents of ours are—well—incredible; moreover, they are by no means the only or most objectionable companions one borrows from them; and I never go to the Infirmary, where I not unfrequently am requested to look at very dirty limbs and bodies in very dirty draperies, without coming away with a strong inclination to throw myself into the water, and my clothes into the fire, which last would be expensive. I do not suppose that these hateful consequences of dirt and disorder are worse here than among the poor and neglected human creatures who swarm in the lower parts of European cities; but my call to visit them has never been such as that which constrains me to go daily among these poor people, and although on one or two occasions I have penetrated into fearfully foul and filthy abodes of misery in London, I have never rendered the same personal services to their inhabitants that I do to Mr. ——'s slaves, and so have not incurred the same amount of entomological inconvenience.

After leaving the mill I prolonged my walk, and came, for the first time, upon one of the "gangs," as they are called, in full field work. Upon my appearance and approach there was a momentary suspension of labor, and the usual chorus of screams and ejaculations of welcome, affection, and infinite desires for infinite small indulgences.

I was afraid to stop their work, not feeling at all sure that urging a conversation with me would be accepted as any excuse for an uncompleted task, or avert the fatal infliction of the usual award of stripes; so I hurried off and left them to their hoeing.

On my way home I was encountered by London, our Methodist preacher, who accosted me with a request for a Prayer-book and Bible, and expressed his regret at hearing that we were so soon going to St. Simon's. I promised him his holy books, and asked him how he had learned to read, but found it impossible to get him to tell me. I wonder if he thought he should be putting his teacher, whoever he was, in danger of the penalty of the law against instructing the slaves, if he told me who he was; it was impossible to make him do so, so that, besides his other good qualities, he appears to have that most unusual one of all in an uneducated person—discretion. He certainly is a most remarkable man.

After parting with him, I was assailed by a small gang of children, clamoring for the indulgence of some meat, which they besought me to give them. Animal food is only allowed to certain of the harder working men, hedgers and ditchers, and to them only occasionally, and in very moderate rations. My small cannibals clamored round me for flesh, as if I had had a butcher's cart in my pocket, till I began to laugh, and then to run, and away they came, like a pack of little black wolves, at my heels, shrieking, "Missis, you gib me piece meat—missis, you gib me meat," till I got home. At the door I found another petitioner, a young woman named Maria, who brought a fine child in her arms, and demanded a present of a piece of flannel. Upon my asking her who her husband was, she replied, without much hesitation, that she did not possess any such appendage. I gave another look at her bonny baby, and went into the house to get the flannel for

her. I afterward heard from Mr. — that she and two other girls of her age, about seventeen, were the only instances on the island of women with illegitimate children.

After I had been in the house a little while, I was summoned out again to receive the petition of certain poor women in the family-way to have their work lightened. I was, of course, obliged to tell them that I could not interfere in the matter; that their master was away, and that, when he came back, they must present their request to him: they said they had already begged "massa," and he had refused, and they thought, perhaps, if "missis" begged "massa" for them, he would lighten their task. Poor "missis," poor "massa," poor woman, that I am to have such prayers addressed to me! I had to tell them that, if they had already spoken to their master, I was afraid my doing so would be of no use, but that when he came back I would try; so, choking with crying, I turned away from them, and re-entered the house, to the chorus of "Oh, thank you, missis! God bless you, missis!" E——, I think an improvement might be made upon that caricature published a short time ago, called the "Chivalry of the South." I think an elegant young Carolinian or Georgian gentleman, whip in hand, driving a gang of "lusty women," as they are called here, would be a pretty version of the "Chivalry of the South"—a little coarse, I am afraid you will say. Oh! quite horribly coarse, but then so true—a great matter in works of art, which nowadays appear to be thought excellent only in proportion to their lack of ideal elevation. That would be a subject, and a treatment of it, which could not be accused of imaginative exaggeration, at any rate.

In the evening I mentioned the petitions of these poor women to Mr. O——, thinking that perhaps he had the power to lessen their tasks. He seemed evidently annoyed at their having appealed to me; said that their work was

not a bit too much for them, and that constantly they were *shamming* themselves in the family-way in order to obtain a diminution of their labor. Poor creatures! I suppose some of them do; but, again, it must be a hard matter for those who do not, not to obtain the mitigation of their toil which their condition requires; for their assertion and their evidence are never received: they can't be believed, even if they were upon oath, say their white taskmasters; why? because they have never been taught the obligations of an oath, to whom made, or wherefore binding; and they are punished both directly and indirectly for their moral ignorance, as if it were a natural and incorrigible element of their character, instead of the inevitable result of their miserable position. The oath of any and every scoundrelly fellow with a white skin is received, but not that of such a man as Frank, Ned, old Jacob, or Cooper London.

DEAREST E——,—I think it right to begin this letter with an account of a most prosperous fishing expedition Jack and I achieved the other morning. It is true we still occasionally drew up huge catfish, with their detestable beards and spikes, but we also captivated some magnificent perch, and the Altamaha perch are worth one's while both to catch and to eat. On a visit I had to make on the main land the same day, I saw a tiny strip of garden ground, rescued from the sandy road called the street, perfectly filled with hyacinths, double jonquils, and snowdrops, a charming nosegay for February 11. After leaving the boat on my return home, I encountered a curious creature walking all sideways, a small cross between a lobster and a crab. One of the negroes to whom I applied for its denomination informed me that it was a land-crab, with which general description of this very peculiar



A.M.W.

Blossoms from the past.

multipede you must be satisfied, for I can tell you no more. I went a little farther, as the nursery rhyme says, and met with a snake; and, not being able to determine, at ignorant first sight, whether it was a malignant serpent or not, I ingloriously took to my heels, and came home on the full run. It is the first of these exceedingly displeasing animals I have encountered here; but Jack, for my consolation, tells me that they abound on St. Simon's, whither we are going — "rattlesnakes, and all kinds," says he, with an affluence of promise in his tone that is quite agreeable. Rattlesnakes will be quite enough of a treat, without the vague horrors that may be comprised in the additional "all kinds." Jack's account of the game on St. Simon's is really quite tantalizing to me, who can not carry a gun any more than if I were a slave. He says that partridges, woodcocks, snipe, and wild duck abound, so that, at any rate, our table ought to be well supplied. His account of the bears that are still to be found in the woods of the main land is not so pleasant, though he says they do no harm to the people if they are not meddled with, but that they steal the corn from the fields when it is ripe, and actually swim the river to commit their depredations on the islands. It seems difficult to believe this, looking at this wide and heavy stream, though, to be sure, I did once see a young horse swim across the St. Lawrence, between Montreal and Quebec, a feat of natation which much enlarged my belief in what quadrupeds may accomplish when they have no choice between swimming and sinking.

You can not imagine how great a triumph the virtue next to godliness is making under my auspices and a judicious system of small bribery. I can hardly stir now without being assailed with cries of "Missis, missis, me mind chile, me bery clean," or the additional gratifying fact, "and chile too, him bery clean." This virtue, how-

ever, if painful to the practisers, as no doubt it is, is expensive, too, to me, and I shall have to try some moral influence equivalent in value to a cent current coin of the realm. What a poor chance, indeed, the poor abstract idea runs! however, it is really a comfort to see the poor little woolly heads now, in most instances, stripped of their additional filthy artificial envelopes.

In my afternoon's row to-day I passed a huge dead alligator, lying half in and half out of the muddy slime of the river bank—a most hideous object it was, and I was glad to turn my eyes to the beautiful surface of the mid stream, all burnished with sunset glories, and broken with the vivacious gambols of a school of porpoises. It is curious, I think, that these creatures should come fifteen miles from the sea to enliven the waters round our little rice swamp.

While rowing this evening, I was led by my conversation with Jack to some of those reflections with which my mind is naturally incessantly filled here, but which I am obliged to be very careful not to give any utterance to. The testimony of no negro is received in a Southern court of law, and the reason commonly adduced for this is, that the state of ignorance in which the negroes are necessarily kept renders them incapable of comprehending the obligations of an oath, and yet, with an inconsistency which might be said to border on effrontery, these same people are admitted to the most holy sacrament of the Church, and are certainly thereby supposed to be capable of assuming the highest Christian obligations, and the entire fulfillment of God's commandments, including, of course, the duty of speaking the truth at all times.

As we were proceeding down the river, we met the flat, as it is called, a huge sort of clumsy boat, more like a raft than any other species of craft, coming up from St. Simon's with its usual swarthy freight of Mr. ——'s de-

pendents from that place. I made Jack turn our canoe, because the universal outcries and exclamations very distinctly intimated that I should be expected to be at home to receive the homage of this cargo of "massa's people." No sooner, indeed, had I disembarked and reached the house, than a dark cloud of black life filled the piazza and swarmed up the steps, and I had to shake hands, like a popular president, till my arm ached at the shoulder-joint.

When this tribe had dispersed itself, a very old woman, with a remarkably intelligent, nice-looking young girl, came forward and claimed my attention. The old woman, who must, I think, by her appearance, have been near seventy, had been one of the house servants on St. Simon's Island in Major ——'s time, and retained a certain dignified courtesy and respectfulness of manner which is by no means an uncommon attribute of the better class of slaves, whose intercourse with their masters, while tending to expand their intelligence, cultivates, at the same time, the natural turn for good manners which is, I think, a distinctive peculiarity of negroes, if not in the kingdom of Dahomey, certainly in the United States of America. If it can be for a moment attributed to the beneficent influence of slavery on their natures (and I think slaveowners are quite likely to imagine so), it is curious enough that there is hardly any alloy whatever of cringing servility, or even humility, in the good manners of the blacks, but a rather courtly and affable condescension which, combined with their affection for, and misapplication of, long words, produces an exceedingly comical effect. Old House Molly, after congratulating herself, with many thanks to heaven, for having spared her to see "massa's" wife and children, drew forward her young companion, and informed me she was one of her numerous grandchildren. The damsel, ycleped Louisa, made rather a shamefaced obeisance, and her old grandmother went on to inform

me that she had only lately been forgiven by the overseer for an attempt to run away from the plantation. I inquired the cause of her desire to do so—a “thrashing” she had got for an unfinished task—“but lor, missis,” explained the old woman, “taint no use—what use nigger run away?—de swamp all round; dey get in dar, an’ dey starve to def, or de snakes eat ’em up—massa’s nigger, dey don’t neber run away;” and if the good lady’s account of their prospects in doing so is correct (which, substituting biting for eating on the part of the snakes, it undoubtedly is), one does not see exactly what particular merit the institution of slavery as practiced on Mr. ——’s plantation derives from the fact that his “nigger don’t neber run away.”

After dismissing Molly and her granddaughter, I was about to re-enter the house, when I was stopped by Betty, head man Frank’s wife, who came with a petition that she might be baptized. As usual with all requests involving any thing more than an immediate physical indulgence, I promised to refer the matter to Mr. ——, but expressed some surprise that Betty, now by no means a young woman, should have postponed a ceremony which the religious among the slaves are apt to attach much importance to. She told me she had more than once applied for this permission to Massa K—— (the former overseer), but had never been able to obtain it, but that now she thought she would ask “de missis.”*

* Of this woman’s life on the plantation I subsequently learned the following circumstances: She was the wife of head man Frank, the most intelligent and trustworthy of Mr. ——’s slaves; the head driver—second in command to the overseer, and, indeed, second to none during the pestilential season, when the rice swamps can not with impunity be inhabited by any white man, and when, therefore, the whole force employed in its cultivation on the island remains entirely under his authority and control. His wife—a tidy, trim, intelligent woman, with a pretty figure, but a decidedly negro face—was taken from him by the

Yesterday afternoon I received a visit from the wife of our neighbor, Dr. T——. As usual, she exclaimed at my good fortune in having a white woman with my children when she saw M——, and, as usual, went on to expatiate on the utter impossibility of finding a trustworthy nurse any where in the South, to whom your children could be safely confided for a day or even an hour; as usual, too, the causes of this unworthiness or incapacity for a confidential servant's occupation were ignored, and the fact laid to the natural defects of the negro race. I am sick and weary of this cruel and ignorant folly. This afternoon I went out to refresh myself with a row on the broad Altamaha and the conversation of my slave Jack, which is, I assure you, by no means devoid of interest of various kinds, pathetic and humorous. I do not know that Jack's scientific information is the most valuable in the world,

overseer left in charge of the plantation by the Messrs. ——, the all-efficient and all-satisfactory Mr. K——, and she had a son by him, whose straight features and diluted color, no less than his troublesome, discontented, and insubmissive disposition, bear witness to his Yankee descent. I do not know how long Mr. K——'s occupation of Frank's wife continued, or how the latter endured the wrong done to him. When I visited the island Betty was again living with her husband—a grave, sad, thoughtful-looking man, whose admirable moral and mental qualities were extolled to me by no worse a judge of such matters than Mr. K—— himself, during the few days he spent with Mr. ——, while we were on the plantation. This outrage upon this man's rights was perfectly notorious among all the slaves; and his hopeful offspring, Renty, alluding very unmistakably to his superior birth on one occasion when he applied for permission to have a gun, observed that, though the people in general on the plantation were not allowed fire-arms, he thought he might, *on account of his color*, and added that he thought Mr. K—— might have left him his. This precious sample of the mode in which the vices of the whites procure the intellectual progress of the blacks to their own endangerment was, as you will easily believe, a significant chapter to me in the black history of oppression which is laid before my eyes in this place.

and I sometimes marvel with perhaps unjust incredulity at the facts in natural history which he imparts to me; for instance, to-day he told me, as we rowed past certain mud islands, very like children's mud puddings on a rather larger scale than usual, that they were inaccessible, and that it would be quite impossible to land on one of them even for the shortest time. Not understanding why people who did not mind being up to their knees in mud should not land there if they pleased, I demurred to his assertion, when he followed it up by assuring me that there were what he called sand-sinks under the mud, and that whatever was placed on the surface would not only sink through the mud, but also into a mysterious quicksand of unknown depth and extent below it. This may be true, but sounds very strange, although I remember that the frequent occurrence of large patches of quicksand was found to be one of the principal impediments in the way of the canal speculators at Brunswick. I did not, however, hear that these sinks, as Jack called them, were found below a thick stratum of heavy mud.

In remonstrating with him upon the want of decent cleanliness generally among the people, and citing to him one among the many evils resulting from it, the intolerable quantity of fleas in all the houses, he met me full with another fact in natural history which, if it be fact and not fiction, certainly gave him the best of the argument: he declared, with the utmost vehemence, that the sand of the pine woods on the main land across the river literally swarmed with fleas; that, in the uninhabited places, the sand itself was full of them; and that, so far from being a result of human habitation, they were found in less numbers round the negro huts on the main land than in the lonely woods around them.

The plowing is at length fully inaugurated, and there is a regular jubilee among the negroes thereat. After

discoursing fluently on the improvements likely to result from the measure, Jack wound up by saying he had been afraid it would not be tried on account of the greater scarcity, and consequently greater value, of horses over men in these parts—a modest and slave-like conclusion.

DEAREST E——,—I walked up to-day, *February 14th*, to see that land of promise, the plowed field: it did not look to me any thing like as heavy soil as the cold, wet, sour, stiff clay I have seen turned up in some of the swampy fields round Lenox; and as for the cypress roots which were urged as so serious an impediment, they are not much more frequent, and certainly not as resisting, as the granite knees and elbows that stick out through the scanty covering of the said clay, which mother earth allows herself as sole garment for her old bones in many a Berkshire patch of corn. After my survey, as I walked home, I came upon a gang of lusty women, as the phrase is here for women in the family-way; they were engaged in burning stubble, and I was nearly choked while receiving the multitudinous complaints and compliments with which they overwhelmed me. After leaving them, I wandered along the river side of the dike homeward, rejoicing in the buds and green things putting forth their tender shoots on every spray, in the early bees and even the less amiable wasps busy in the sunshine with flowers (weeds I suppose they should be called), already opening their sweet temptations to them, and giving the earth a spring aspect, such as it does not wear with you in Massachusetts till late in May.

In the afternoon I took my accustomed row: there had been a tremendous ebb tide, the consequence of which was to lay bare portions of the banks which I had not seen before. The cypress roots form a most extraordinary

mass of intertwined wood-work, so closely matted and joined together that the separate roots, in spite of their individual peculiarities, appeared only like divisions of a continuous body; they presented the appearance in several places of jagged pieces of splintered rock, with their huge teeth pointing downward into the water. Their decay is so slow that the protection they afford the soft spongy banks against the action of the water is likely to be prolonged until the gathering and deposit of successive layers of alluvium will remove them from the margin of which they are now most useful supports. On my return home I was met by a child (as she seemed to me) carrying a baby, in whose behalf she begged me for some clothes. On making some inquiry, I was amazed to find that the child was her own: she said she was married, and fourteen years old; she looked much younger even than that, poor creature. Her mother, who came up while I was talking to her, said she did not herself know the girl's age; how horridly brutish it all did seem, to be sure.

The spring is already here with her hands full of flowers. I do not know who planted some straggling pyrus japonica near the house, but it is blessing my eyes with a hundred little flame-like buds, which will presently burst into a blaze; there are clumps of narcissus roots sending up sheaves of ivory blossoms, and I actually found a monthly rose in bloom on the sunny side of one of the dikes; what a delight they are in the slovenly desolation of this abode of mine! what a garden one might have on the banks of these dikes, with the least amount of trouble and care!

In the afternoon I rowed over to Darien, and there procuring the most miserable vehicle calling itself a carriage that I had ever seen (the dirtiest and shabbiest London hackney-coach were a chariot of splendor and ease to it),

we drove some distance into the sandy wilderness that surrounds the little town, to pay a visit to some of the resident gentry who had called upon us. The road was a deep, wearisome sandy track, stretching wearisomely into the wearisome pine forest—a species of wilderness more oppressive a thousand times to the senses and imagination than any extent of monotonous prairie, barren steppe, or boundless desert can be; for the horizon there at least invites and detains the eye, suggesting beyond its limit possible change; the lights, and shadows, and enchanting colors of the sky afford some variety in their movement and change, and the reflections of their tints; while in this hideous and apparently boundless pine barren you are deprived alike of horizon before you and heaven above you: nor sun nor star appears through the thick covert, which, in the shabby dinginess of its dark blue-green expanse, looks like a gigantic cotton umbrella stretched immeasurably over you. It is true that over that sandy soil a dark green cotton umbrella is a very welcome protection from the sun, and when the wind makes music in the tall pine-tops and refreshment in the air beneath them. The comparison may seem ungrateful enough: to-day, however, there was neither sound above nor motion below, and the heat was perfectly stifling, as we plowed our way through the resinous-smelling sand solitudes.

From time to time a thicket of exquisite evergreen shrubs broke the monotonous lines of the countless pine shafts rising round us, and still more welcome were the golden garlands of the exquisite wild jasmine, hanging, drooping, trailing, clinging, climbing through the dreary forest, joining to the warm aromatic smell of the fir-trees a delicious fragrance as of acres of heliotrope in bloom. I wonder if this delightful creature is very difficult of cultivation out of its natural region; I never remember to

have seen it, at least not in blossom, in any collection of plants in the Northern states or in Europe, where it certainly deserves an honorable place for its grace, beauty, and fragrance.

On our drive we passed occasionally a tattered man or woman, whose yellow mud complexion, straight features, and singularly sinister countenance bespoke an entirely different race from the negro population in the midst of which they lived. These are the so-called pine-landers of Georgia, I suppose the most degraded race of human beings claiming an Anglo-Saxon origin that can be found on the face of the earth—filthy, lazy, ignorant, brutal, proud, penniless savages, without one of the nobler attributes which have been found occasionally allied to the vices of savage nature. They own no slaves, for they are almost without exception abjectly poor; they will not work, for that, as they conceive, would reduce them to an equality with the abhorred negroes; they squat, and steal, and starve, on the outskirts of this lowest of all civilized societies, and their countenances bear witness to the squalor of their condition and the utter degradation of their natures. To the crime of slavery, though they have no profitable part or lot in it, they are fiercely accessory, because it is the barrier that divides the black and white races, at the foot of which they lie wallowing in unspeakable degradation, but immensely proud of the base freedom which still separates them from the lash-driven tillers of the soil.*

* Of such is the white family so wonderfully described in Mrs. Stowe's "Dred," whose only slave brings up the orphaned children of his masters with such exquisitely grotesque and pathetic tenderness. From such the conscription which has fed the Southern army in the deplorable civil conflict now raging in America has drawn its rank and file. Better "food for powder" the world could scarcely supply. Fierce and idle, with hardly one of the necessities or amenities that belong to civilized existence, they are hardy endurers of hardship, and



A.M.W.

"Oberon's Banqueting Cups".

The house at which our call was paid was set down in the midst of the Pine Barren, with half-obliterated roads and paths round it, suggesting that it might be visited and was inhabited. It was large and not unhandsome, though curiously dilapidated, considering that people were actually living in it; certain remnants of carving on the cornices and paint on the panels bore witness to some former stage of existence less neglected and deteriorated than the present. The old lady mistress of this most forlorn abode amiably inquired if so much exercise did not fatigue me; at first I thought she imagined I must have walked through the pine forest all the way from Darien, but she explained that she considered the drive quite an effort; and it is by no means uncommon to hear people in America talk of being dragged over bad roads in uneasy carriages as exercise, showing how very little they know the meaning of the word, and how completely they identify it with the idea of mere painful fatigue instead of pleasurable exertion.

Returning home, my reflections ran much on the possible future destiny of these vast tracts of sandy soil. It seems to me that the ground capable of supporting the evergreen growth, the luxuriant gardenia bushes, the bay myrtle, the beautiful magnolia grandiflora, and the powerful and gnarled live oaks, that find their sustenance in this reckless to a savage degree of the value of life, whether their own or others. The soldier's pay, received or promised, exceeds in amount per month any thing they ever earned before per year, and the war they wage is one that enlists all their proud and ferocious instincts. It is against the Yankees—the Northern sons of free soil, free toil and intelligence, the hated Abolitionists whose success would sweep away slavery and reduce the Southern white men to work—no wonder they are ready to fight to the death against this detestable alternative, especially as they look to victory as the certain promotion of the refuse of the “poor white” population of the South, of which they are one and all members, to the coveted dignity of slaveholders.

earth and under this same sky as the fir-trees, must be convertible into a prosperous habitation for other valuable vegetable growth that would add immensely to the wealth of the Southern states. The orange thrives and bears profusely along this part of the sea-board of Georgia; and I can not conceive that the olive, the mulberry, and the vine might not be acclimated, and successfully and profitably cultivated throughout the whole of this region, the swampy lower lands alone remaining as rice plantations. The produce of these already exceeds in value that of the once gold-growing cotton-fields; and I can not help believing that silk, and wine, and oil may, and will, hereafter become, with the present solitary cotton crop, joint possessors of all this now but half-reclaimed wilderness. The soil all round Sorrento is very nearly as light, and dry, and sandy as this, and vineyards, and olive orchards, and cocooneries are part of the agricultural wealth there. Our neighbor, Mr. C——, has successfully cultivated the date-palm in his garden on the edge of the sea at St. Simon's, and certainly the ilex, orange, and myrtle abounding here suggest natural affinities between the Italian soil and climate and this.

I must tell you something funny which occurred yesterday at dinner, which will give you some idea of the strange mode in which we live. We have now not unfrequently had mutton at table, the flavor of which is quite excellent, as indeed it may well be, for it is raised under all the conditions of the famous *Prè salé* that the French gourmands especially prize, and which are reproduced on our side of the Channel in the peculiar qualities of our best South Down. The mutton we have here grazes on the short sweet grass at St. Simon's within sea-salt influence, and is some of the very best I have ever tasted, but it is invariably brought to table in lumps or chunks of no particular shape or size, and in which it is utterly impossible to rec-

ognize any part of the quadruped creature sheep with which my eyes have hitherto become acquainted. Eat it, one may and does thankfully; name it, one could not by any possibility. Having submitted to this for some time, I at length inquired why a decent usual Christian joint of mutton—leg, shoulder, or saddle—was never brought to table: the reply was that the *carpenter* always cut up the meat, and that he did not know how to do it otherwise than by dividing it into so many thick square pieces, and proceeding to chop it up on that principle; and the consequence of this is, that *four lumps* or *chunks* are all that a whole sheep ever furnishes to our table by this artistic and economical process.

This morning I have been to the hospital to see a poor woman who has just enriched Mr. — by *borning* him another slave. The poor little pickaninny, as they called it, was not one bit uglier than white babies under similarly novel circumstances, except in one particular, that it had a head of hair like a trunk, in spite of which I had all the pains in the world in persuading its mother not to put a cap upon it. I bribed her finally by the promise of a pair of socks instead, with which I undertook to endow her child, and, moreover, actually prevailed upon her to forego the usual swaddling and swathing process, and let her poor baby be dressed at its first entrance into life as I assured her both mine had been.

On leaving the hospital I visited the huts all along the street, confiscating sundry refractory baby caps among shrieks and outcries, partly of laughter and partly of real ignorant alarm for the consequences. I think, if this infatuation for hot head-dresses continues, I shall make shaving the children's heads the only condition upon which they shall be allowed to wear caps.

On Sunday morning I went over to Darien to church. Our people's church was closed, the minister having gone

to officiate elsewhere. With laudable liberality, I walked into the opposite church of a different, not to say opposite sect: here I heard a sermon, the opening of which will probably edify you as it did me, viz., that if a man was *just in all his dealings*, he was apt to think he did all that could be required of him—and no wide mistake either, one might suppose. But is it not wonderful how such words can be spoken here, with the most absolute unconsciousness of their tremendous bearing upon the existence of every slaveholder who hears them? Certainly the use that is second nature has made the awful injustice in the daily practice of which these people live a thing of which they are as little aware as you or I of the atmospheric air that we inhale each time we breathe. The bulk of the congregation in this church was white. The negroes are, of course, not allowed to mix with their masters in the house of God, and there is no special place set apart for them. Occasionally one or two are to be seen in the corners of the singing gallery, but any more open pollution by them of their owners' church could not be tolerated. Mr. ——'s people have petitioned very vehemently that he would build a church for them on the island. I doubt, however, his allowing them such a luxury as a place of worship all to themselves. Such a privilege might not be thought well of by the neighboring planters; indeed, it is almost what one might call a whity-brown idea, dangerous, demoralizing, inflammatory, incendiary. I should not wonder if I should be suspected of being the chief cornerstone of it, and yet I am not: it is an old hope and entreaty of these poor people, which I am afraid they are not destined to see fulfilled.

DEAREST E——,—Passing the rice mill this morning in my walk, I went in to look at the machinery, the large steam mortars which shell the rice, and which work under the intelligent and reliable supervision of Engineer Ned. I was much surprised, in the course of conversation with him this morning, to find how much older a man he was than he appeared. Indeed, his youthful appearance had hitherto puzzled me much in accounting for his very superior intelligence and the important duties confided to him. He is, however, a man upward of forty years old, although he looks ten years younger. He attributed his own uncommonly youthful appearance to the fact of his never having done what he called field-work, or been exposed, as the common gang negroes are, to the hardships of their all but brutish existence. He said his former master had brought him up very kindly, and he had learned to tend the engines, and had never been put to any other work, but he said this was not the case with his poor wife. He wished she was as well off as he was, but she had to work in the rice-fields, and was “most broke in two” with labor, and exposure, and hard work while with child, and hard work just directly after childbearing; he said she could hardly crawl, and he urged me very much to speak a kind word for her to massa. She was almost all the time in hospital, and he thought she could not live long.

Now, E——, here is another instance of the horrible injustice of this system of slavery. In my country or in yours, a man endowed with sufficient knowledge and capacity to be an engineer would, of course, be in the receipt of considerable wages; his wife would, together with himself, reap the advantages of his ability, and share the well-being his labor earned; he would be able to procure for her comfort in sickness or in health, and beyond the necessary household work, which the wives of most

artisans are inured to, she would have no labor to encounter; in case of sickness even these would be alleviated by the assistance of some stout girl of all work or kindly neighbor, and the tidy parlor or snug bedroom would be her retreat if unequal to the daily duties of her own kitchen. Think of such a lot compared with that of the head engineer of Mr. ——'s plantation, whose sole wages are his coarse food and raiment and miserable hovel, and whose wife, covered with one filthy garment of ragged texture and dingy color, barefooted and bare-headed, is daily driven afield to labor with aching pain-racked joints, under the lash of a driver, or lies languishing on the earthen floor of the dismal plantation hospital in a condition of utter physical destitution and degradation such as the most miserable dwelling of the poorest inhabitant of your free Northern villages never beheld the like of. Think of the rows of tidy tiny houses in the long suburbs of Boston and Philadelphia, inhabited by artisans of just the same grade as this poor Ned, with their white doors and steps, their hydrants of inexhaustible fresh flowing water, the innumerable appliances for decent comfort of their cheerful rooms, the gay wardrobe of the wife, her cotton prints for daily use, her silk for Sunday church-going; the careful comfort of the children's clothing, the books and newspapers in the little parlor, the daily district school, the weekly parish church: imagine if you can—but you are happy that you can not—the contrast between such an existence and that of the best mechanic on a Southern plantation.

Did you ever read (but I am sure you never did, and no more did I) an epic poem on fresh-water fish? Well, such a one was once written, I have forgotten by whom, but assuredly the heroine of it ought to have been the Altamaha shad—a delicate creature, so superior to the animal you Northerners devour with greedy thankfulness

when the spring sends back their finny drove to your colder waters, that one would not suppose these were of the same family, instead of being, as they really are, precisely the same fish. Certainly the mud of the Altamaha must have some most peculiar virtues; and, by-the-by, I have never any where tasted such delicious tea as that which we make with this same turbid stream, the water of which, duly filtered of course, has some peculiar softness which affects the tea (and it is the same we always use) in a most curious and agreeable manner.

On my return to the house I found a terrible disturbance in consequence of the disappearance from under cook John's safe keeping of a ham Mr. — had committed to his charge. There was no doubt whatever that the unfortunate culinary slave had made away in some inscrutable manner with the joint intended for our table: the very lies he told about it were so curiously shallow, child-like, and transparent, that while they confirmed the fact of his theft quite as much, if not more, than an absolute confession would have done, they provoked at once my pity and my irrepressible mirth to a most painful degree. Mr. — was in a state of towering anger and indignation, and, besides a flogging, sentenced the unhappy cook to degradation from his high and dignified position (and, alas! all its sweets of comparatively easy labor and good living from the remains of our table) to the hard toil, coarse scanty fare, and despised position of a common field-hand. I suppose some punishment was inevitably necessary in such a plain case of deliberate theft as this, but, nevertheless, my whole soul revolts at the injustice of visiting upon these poor wretches a moral darkness which all possible means are taken to increase and perpetuate.

In speaking of this and the whole circumstance of John's trespass to Mr. — in the evening, I observed

that the ignorance of these poor people ought to screen them from punishment. He replied that they knew well enough what was right and wrong. I asked how they could be expected to know it? He replied, by the means of Cooper London, and the religious instruction he gave them. So that, after all, the appeal is to be made against themselves to that moral and religious instruction which is withheld from them, and which, if they obtain it at all, is the result of their own unaided and unencouraged exertion. The more I hear, and see, and learn, and ponder the whole of this system of slavery, the more impossible I find it to conceive how its practisers and upholders are to justify their deeds before the tribunal of their own conscience or God's law. It is too dreadful to have those whom we love accomplices to this wickedness; it is too intolerable to find myself an involuntary accomplice to it.

I had a conversation the next morning with Abraham, cook John's brother, upon the subject of his brother's theft; and only think of the *slave* saying that "this action had brought disgrace upon the family." Does not that sound very like the very best sort of free pride, the pride of character, the honorable pride of honesty, integrity, and fidelity? But this was not all, for this same Abraham, a clever carpenter and much valued *hand* on the estate, went on, in answer to my questions, to tell me such a story that I declare to you I felt as if I could have howled with helpless indignation and grief when he departed and went to resume his work. His grandfather had been an old slave in Darien, extremely clever as a carpenter, and so highly valued for his skill and good character that his master allowed him to purchase his liberty by money which he earned by working for himself at odd times, when his task-work was over. I asked Abraham what sum his grandfather paid for his freedom: he said he did not know, but he supposed a large one, because of

his being a "skilled carpenter," and so a peculiarly valuable chattel. I presume, from what I remember Major M—— and Dr. H—— saying on the subject of the market value of negroes in Charleston and Savannah, that such a man in the prime of life would have been worth from 1500 to 2000 dollars. However, whatever the man paid for his ransom, by his grandson's account, fourteen years after he became free, when he died, he had again amassed money to the amount of 700 dollars, which he left among his wife and children, the former being a slave on Major ——'s estate, where the latter remained by virtue of that fact slaves also. So this man not only bought his own freedom at a cost of *at least* 1000 dollars, but left a little fortune of 700 more at his death; and then we are told of the universal idleness, incorrigible sloth, and brutish incapacity of this inferior race of creatures, whose only fitting and Heaven-appointed condition is that of beasts of burden to the whites. I do not believe the whole low white population of the State of Georgia could furnish such an instance of energy, industry, and thrift as the amassing of this laborious little fortune by this poor slave, who left, nevertheless, his children and grandchildren to the lot from which he had so heroically ransomed himself; and yet the white men with whom I live and talk tell me, day after day, that there is neither cruelty nor injustice in this accursed system.

About half past five I went to walk on the dikes, and met a gang of the field-hands going to the tide-mill, as the water served them for working then. I believe I have told you that besides the great steam mill there is this, which is dependent on the rise and fall of the tide in the river, and where the people are therefore obliged to work by day or night, at whatever time the water serves to impel the wheel. They greeted me with their usual profusion of exclamations, petitions, and benedictions, and I

parted from them to come and oversee my slave Jack, for whom I had bought a spade, and to whom I had intrusted the task of turning up some ground for me, in which I wanted to establish some of the narcissus and other flowers I had remarked about the ground and the house. Jack, however, was a worse digger than Adam could have been when first he turned his hand to it, after his expulsion from Paradise. I think I could have managed a spade with infinitely more efficiency, or rather less incapacity, than he displayed. Upon my expressing my amazement at his performance, he said the people here never used spades, but performed all their agricultural operations with the hoe. Their soil must be very light and their agriculture very superficial, I should think. However, I was obliged to terminate Jack's spooning process, and abandon, for the present, my hopes of a flower-bed created by his industry, being called into the house to receive the return visit of old Mrs. S——. As usual, the appearance, health, vigor, and good management of the children were the theme of wondering admiration; as usual, my possession of a white nurse the theme of envious congratulation; as usual, I had to hear the habitual senseless complaints of the inefficiency of colored nurses. If you are half as tired of the sameness and stupidity of the conversation of my Southern female neighbors as I am, I pity you; but not as much as I pity them for the stupid sameness of their most vapid existence, which would deaden any amount of intelligence, obliterate any amount of instruction, and render torpid and stagnant any amount of natural energy and vivacity. I would rather die—rather a thousand times—than live the lives of these Georgia planters' wives and daughters.

Mrs. S—— had brought me some of the delicious wild jasmine that festoons her dreary pine-wood drive, and most grateful I was for the presence of the sweet wild

nosegay in my highly unornamental residence. When my visitors had left me, I took the refreshment of a row over to Darien; and as we had the tide against us coming back, the process was not so refreshing for the rowers. The evening was so extremely beautiful, and the rising of the moon so exquisite, that instead of retreating to the house when I reached the island, I got into the Dolphin, my special canoe, and made Jack paddle me down the great river to meet the Lily, which was coming back from St. Simon's with Mr. —, who has been preparing all things for our advent thither.

My letter has been interrupted, dear E——, by the breaking up of our residence on the rice plantation, and our arrival at St. Simon's, whence I now address you. We came down yesterday afternoon, and I was thankful enough of the fifteen miles' row to rest in, from the labor of leave-taking, with which the whole morning was taken up, and which, combined with packing and preparing all our own personalities and those of the children, was no sinecure. At every moment one or other of the poor people rushed in upon me to bid me good-by; many of their farewells were grotesque enough, some were pathetic, and all of them made me very sad. Poor people! how little I have done, how little I can do for them. I had a long talk with that interesting and excellent man, Cooper London, who made an earnest petition that I would send him from the North a lot of Bibles and Prayer-books; certainly the science of reading must be much more common among the negroes than I supposed, or London must look to a marvelously increased spread of the same hereafter. There is, however, considerable reticence upon this point, or else the poor slaves must consider the mere possession of the holy books as good for salvation and as effectual for spiritual assistance to those who can not as to those who can comprehend them. Since the news of our de-

parture has spread, I have had repeated eager entreaties for presents of Bibles and Prayer-books, and to my demurrer of "But you can't read, can you?" have generally received for answer a reluctant acknowledgment of ignorance, which, however, did not always convince me of the fact. In my farewell conversation with London I found it impossible to get him to tell me how he had learned to read: the penalties for teaching them are very severe— heavy fines, increasing in amount for the first and second offense, and imprisonment for the third.* Such a man as London is certainly aware that to teach the slaves to read is an illegal act, and he may have been unwilling to betray whoever had been his preceptor even to my knowledge; at any rate, I got no answers from him but "Well, missis, me learn; well, missis, me try;" and finally, "Well, missis, me 'spose Heaven help me;" to which I could only reply that I knew Heaven was helpful, but very hardly to the tune of teaching folks their letters. I got no satisfaction. Old Jacob, the father of Abraham, cook John, and poor Psyche's husband, took a most solemn and sad leave of me, saying he did not expect ever to see me again. I could not exactly tell why, because, though he is aged and infirm, the fifteen miles between the rice plantation and St. Simon's do not appear so insuperable a barrier between the inhabitants of the two places, which I represented to him as a suggestion of consolation.

I have worked my fingers nearly off with making, for the last day or two, innumerable rolls of coarse little baby-clothes, layettes for the use of small new-born slaves;

* These laws have been greatly increased in stringency and severity since these letters were written, and *death* has not been reckoned too heavy a penalty for those who should venture to offer these unfortunate people the fruit of that forbidden tree of knowledge, their access to which has appeared to their owners the crowning danger of their own precarious existence among their terrible dependents.



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