

LETTERS ON SLAVERY,

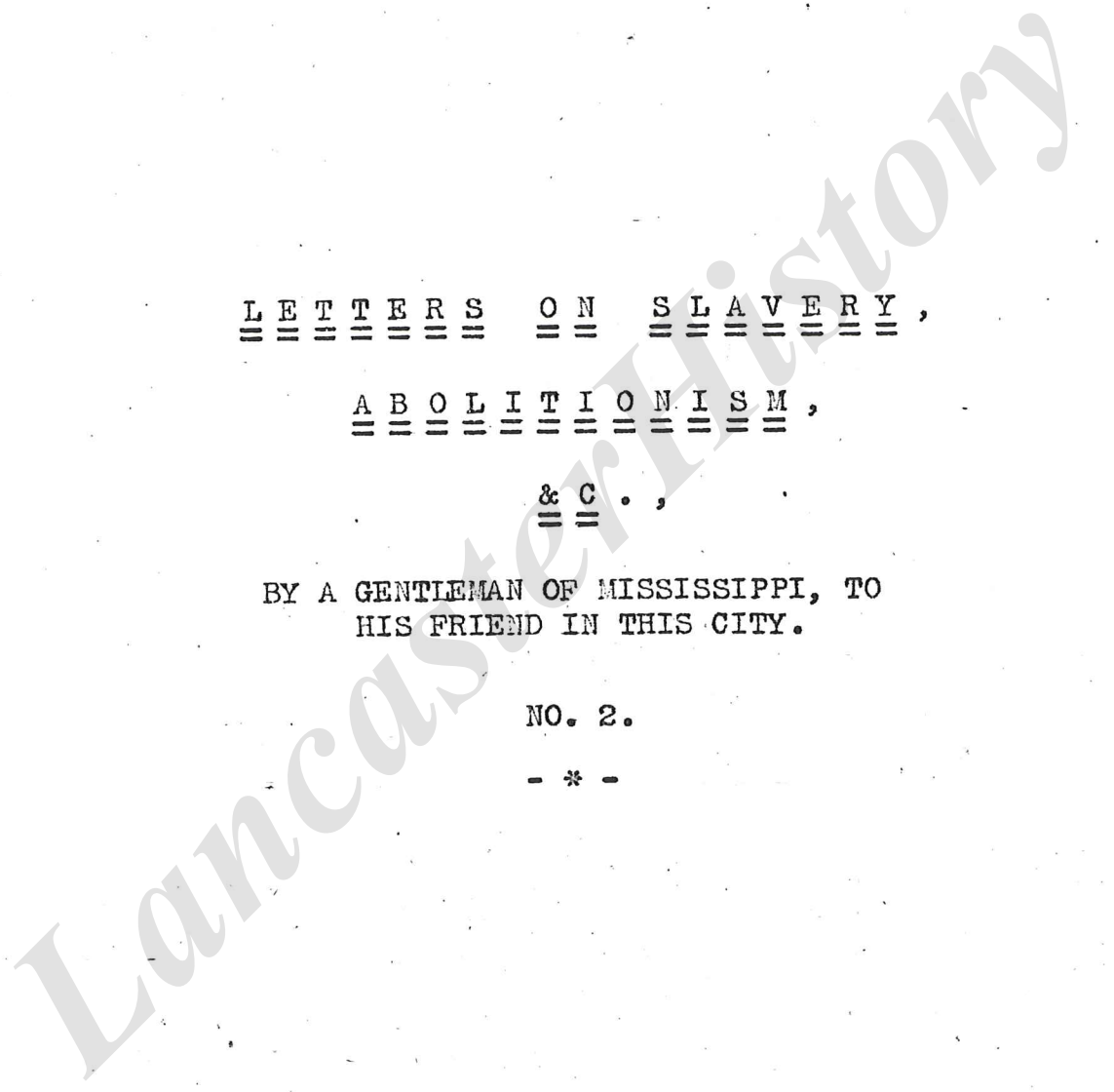
ABOLITIONISM,

& C.

BY A GENTLEMAN OF MISSISSIPPI, TO
HIS FRIEND IN THIS CITY.

NO. 2.

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NEAR NATCHEZ, (Miss.,)
November 5, 1851.

My Dear Friend--I called your attention, in closing my last letter, to the fact, that motives of philanthropy never actuate the British statesmen in measures of State policy; and that their conduct towards the Chinese, as well as other State measures, was evidence of this assertion. The production of opium in the British East India colonies, as you are doubtless aware, is worth some twenty millions annually to the East India Company, and the Chinese take nearly or quite the whole of it. The Rev. Mr. Malcom, a missionary of the American Baptist Church, who travelled through the East some years ago, thus alludes to this trade: "No person can describe the horrors of the opium trade. The drug is produced by compulsion, accompanied with miseries to the cultivators, greater than slaves endure in any part of the earth. The prices paid to the producer scarcely sustain life, and are many per cent. less than the article produces in China. The whole process of carrying and vending is an enormous infringement of the laws of nations, and such as would immediately produce a declaration of war by any European power. The grandest and grossest smuggling trade on the globe! The influence of the drug upon China is more awful and extensive than that of rum in any country, and worse to its victims than any outward slavery. That the government of British India should be the prime abettors of this abominable traffic, is one of the wonders of the nineteenth century. The proud escutcheon of the nation, which declaims against the slave trade, is thus made to bear a blot broader and darker than any other in the Christian world." (See Malcom's Travels, vol. 2, page 160.)

Although the enlightened men of the Chinese nation saw and deplored the demoralizing effects of opium eating upon their people, and passed the most stringent laws to prohibit its importation, they found themselves out-witted by the ingenuity of the British smuggler; and when, in self-defense, they seized upon and destroyed the obnoxious drug, war, with all its appalling accompaniments, burst upon their country, and deadlier pills than opium soon compelled them to yield again to its introduction.

Here, then, is a specimen of England's boasted philanthropy; and has conduct so atrocious roused the British nation to redress the wrongs of these deeply wounded people! Not at all. There is nothing in this cruel policy, so long as it brings twenty millions annually into the coffers of the East India Company, black enough to disturb their feelings of humanity.

Another matter. It is not generally known that in these sane British East India possessions, there are millions of Hindoo slaves. Let me in proof of this assertion quote you another page from Malcom, who travelled through Hindostan, and published his work in 1838. Here it is; just look at it: "The number of slaves in the Carnatic, Mysore, and Malabar, is said to be greater than in most parts of India, and embraces nearly the whole of one caste. The whole number in British India has never been ascertained, but it is supposed by the best informed persons I was able to consult, to be on an average at least one in eight, that is, about ten millions. Many consider them twice as numerous. The number is kept up not only by propagation, but the sale of children by their parents. It is strange that the British public should be so slow to open their eyes to this great subject. For twenty years appeals and pamphlets have frequently appeared. In 1828 a volume of 1,000

pages of parliamentary documents on East India slavery was printed; and within four or five years, some strenuous efforts have been made to call attention to this enormity, but as yet nothing has been to any purpose. Surely the zeal which has achieved the freedom of a few hundred thousand slaves in the West Indies, will now be exerted in behalf of twenty-five times that number in the East."-- (See Malcom's Travels, vol. 2, page 71.)

Allow me to call your attention to another fact. Contemporaneously with the emancipation of her slaves in her West India colonies, the British government sent agents into these southern States, and employed numbers of young men at large salaries, to go out to her East India possessions, to instruct the natives the most approved methods of cotton culture. If she affected by her emancipation act and the influence of her emissaries, the downfall of slavery in this country, she well knew her cotton crop must fall with it; but with millions of acres, and millions of slaves in her India empire, she hoped readily to replace the loss of the American crop; and, at the same time effectually to carry out her gigantic project, she claimed (under the pretence of suppressing the slave trade) to engraft the right of search upon the law of nations. Well did an honest Frenchman, who wrote a pamphlet, calling the attention of his countrymen to England's ambition during this juncture, exclaim:

"Pour quoi sa Philanthropie n'a pas daigné, doubler le Cap De Bonne Esperance?" Why has British philanthropy never deigned to look beyond the Cape of Good Hope?

But I revert to still louder calls upon her philanthropy at home--to the frightful destitution, and other want of morals which characterize her laboring poor. I will give you authorities which

cannot be gainsayed or controverted. I extract from the reports of commissioners appointed by Parliament and published by order of the House of Commons:

Collieries.-- "The pits are worked by boys with a dog chain and belt on all fours. These poor boys have to drag the barrows with 100 wt. of coal sixty times a day, sixty yards, and the empty barrows back along a passage with only two feet headway, without ever once straightening their backs."-- Report on Mines. Robert North-- "Age sixteen: Went into the pit at 7 years of age--I drew about 12 months. When I drew by the girdle and chain my skin was broken, and the blood ran down. I durst not say anything, if I did so the butty and the reeve who works under him would take a stick and beat us. The usual punishment for theft is to place the culprit's head between the legs of one of the biggest boys, and each boy in the pit (sometimes there are 20) inflicts twelve lashes on the back and rump with a cat. They work 12 hours a day." I might go on extracting from reports of laborers in cotton and woolen mills, where children are kept at the spindles from 14 to 16 hours continuously, and, when exhausted nature flags, are "sprung up" by the lash. I will now quote from these reports upon other subjects, and first.

Destitution.-- Commissioner's report "that forty thousand persons in Liverpool and fifteen thousand in Manchester live in cellars; both sexes crowded promiscuously together, while in other parts of England twenty-two thousand pass the night in barns or in the open air." Again. "There have been found such occurrences as eight and ten persons in one cottage, I cannot say for one day, but for whole days without a morsel of food. There they lay upon straw under the impression that in a recumbent posture the pangs of hung-

er were less felt."

Morals.-- "Elizabeth Barret, age fourteen. I always worked without stockings, shoes or trousers. I wear nothing but a slip. I have to go up to the headings with the men. They are all naked there, but I am got used to that." The report again adds: "Illicit sexual intercourse universally prevails. A lower condition of morals could not be found, not that there are not many more prominent vices among them, but that moral feelings and sentiments do not exist."

Education.-- "Robert Guchilon, age sixteen. I don't know anything of Moses. Never heard of France. Don't know how many weeks are in the year." "Ann Eggly--I never go to church; never heard of Christ at all. I don't know who made the world. I never heard of God. I don't know Jesus Christ: I never saw him, but I have seen Foster who prays about him." And so I might go on and fill pages from these parliamentary reports, but I desire to introduce another authority. I will quote you a page or two from "Colman's European Agriculture;" the work of an accomplished clergyman, a New England man, who spent some years recently in England, investigating her improved methods of agriculture, and the condition of her laboring classes. He tells us that a distinguished nobleman asserted in the House of Peers, that fifty thousand individuals perish annually in England and Scotland from diseases arising from want and privation; and that this same nobleman, in discussing this important subject, stated that in ten years a larger number perish in England alone from these causes, than the whole number of slaves emancipated in their colonies. He further remarks: "I was conversing with a friend on this subject, a gentleman of great intelligence and not wanting in benevolence, and his remark was,

that an increase of production would do little for the lower classes, for they would get no more; with the price of bread their wages if lower be possible, were likely to be reduced; the advantages of such increased products would, of course, go into the hands of the landholders and mill owners, and that for his part he saw no ultimate remedy but starvation; that is, such an actual reduction of the means of living, that multitudes should gradually perish from want, and so thin off the surplus population. He said this too, with all the coolness and indifference with which he would speak of brushing off the flies from the dinner table. 'Good God,' I said within myself, 'has it come to this, that familiarity with want and misery can render the heart of man capable of contemplating such a result with calmness, and that human life on earth should come to be deemed utterly worthless?' If there be any humanity, or any religion left in the world, they must be roused to prevent such a catastrophe."--Vol. 1, page 139.

The quotations just made refer alone to England and Scotland. Hear what Mr. Colman says of Ireland:

"Nothing can exceed the destitution and wretchedness in which millions of these people live. I have been into many of their cabins, and have seen the habitations of thousands and thousands of these miserable people; and in regard to external accommodations, I can scarcely think that there is upon earth a lower condition of human existence. Certainly the wigwam of an American savage may often be regarded with envy for its comforts, compared with many an Irish cabin. I have been into those which were mere holes dug into the sides of a peat bog, and have put my hand upon the wet and velvety walls, that I might be certain that my senses did not deceive me. In these caves, covered with sticks, sods and straw;

without chimney, windows or floor; with a turf slowly burning up-
on the ground and filling the place with smoke; without table,
bed, chair, or knife or fork, with indeed no article of furniture
save a kettle in which to boil their potatoes; with no other seat
but a bit of turf, and no bed to lie down upon but a flock of straw
(shared in common by the children and the pigs,) I have found a
crowded family, with rags for clothing that scarce hid their naked-
ness, living from one year's end to the other upon potatoes and
water, and never more than once a year tasting either bread or
meat."--Vol. 1, page 291. Again, page 338 he says "our horses and
oxen are well fed and cared for, in proportion to the labor they
are compelled to perform; what should we say to the man who refused
them this? But alas, for the poor Men! I have seen hundreds and
hundreds of the laborers, who after a most scanty breakfast, in the
midst of their labors, sometimes severe and always unremitting, had
nothing for their dinner but a bit of dry bread and a draught of
water, and who would return at night, when the toil of the day was
over, to a supper as scanty. Even the inferior butter is not suf-
fered to reach them, but is mixed with tar at the custom house, that
it may be destroyed as human food. In one of the great breweries
in London, where 40 of the famous dray horses are kept, they are
worked but for six years, and then sent into the country to enjoy
rest and comfort the remainder of their lives. What an enviable
condition is this compared with that of many of the human laborers,
in a country enriched by their toil, and flooded with a wealth un-
known before in the history of the world."

If time permitted, I would give you further extracts, especi-
ally his description of the "gang system," where out door laborers,
men, women, boys and girls are put under a cruel task-master; the

shocking state of their morals, and the painful and protracted, and unremunerated labor to which in these gangs they are subjected. Contrast now the statements of Mr. Colman with the picture of American slavery as drawn by Mr. Solon Robinson, one of your agricultural writers, and a northern man, who a year or two ago visited nearly every plantation of importance in the planting States. His essays are too lengthy for insertion here, but you will find them in the New York Agriculturist. I hope you will read them, as I can vouch for the accuracy and truthfulness of his delineations in respect to the physical comforts of our slaves. See how his enthusiasm was fired at the sight of our hale, hearty, robust, well fed and well clad slaves; how universal their cheerfulness and contentment; how the joyous laugh and merry dance greeted his ear upon nearly every plantation; and then their tidy appearance on the Sabbath day as they sat in the negro chapels along side of their masters, to listen to the words of eternal life. How picturesque and comfortable their lodging houses or quarters, in many instances surrounded by gardens and poultry yards of their own. He tells us also, that he had eaten the crust of the British laborer, and been an eye-witness to scenes that Mr. Colman has but faintly pictured. That he has seen these same gaunt and haggard millions kept in subjection only by the bayonet. That for this purpose regiments of horse, or foot, were quartered in nearly every town and city in the kingdom; while in the planting states of this country, he saw a single white man, isolated for miles from any neighbor, keep hundreds of slaves under perfect discipline and subjection.

He states too, that in all his intercourse and time he spent upon Southern plantations he saw no instances of cruelty in punishment, and none that was not abundantly merited, and yet when he

came to the South he expected to see nothing but chains and whips, and the deepest moral and physical degradation among our slave population.-- In closing Mr. Robinson's essays, I was reminded of an anecdote I have somewhere read of a raw paddy, who had found his way into one of the large manufacturing establishments in our country, where meat three times a day and all the plenty which graces the laborer's table in our happy land was paddy's portion. With the generous heart of an Irishman he longed to bring over his kindred to share his happiness and bounty. He gets a friend to write them a letter to tell them of all his riches, and meat once a week. His employer chancing to review what was written, took paddy to task for not telling the whole truth. "Hist! my honey!" was his reply, "lave me alone for that. Ef I towl'd them mate three times a day, divil a word would they believe in it; but mate once a week will bring them quick enough." And so of Mr. Robinson's glowing pictures of negro slavery among us; if he had told but half what he saw, he would doubtless have made a deeper impression upon the northern mind.

But I revert again to English slavery. Let the Thompson's, and Garrison's, and Marrayatt's, and Martineau's tell us what they have done to emancipate the down-trodden millions at their own doors, before they upbraid our negro slavery. If their philanthropy is not all a mockery, there at home are objects for them-- objects that they have never yet raised from the condition of brutes, to the level even of our slaves.

Have we organized societies in this country to send over emissaries to enlighten the English landholder upon the enormity of the evils which their system of primogeniture and other laws entail upon their starving millions? or have we loaded their press

with burning appeals to rouse the passions of the oppressed laborer, against the nobility and government? And yet such proceedings would be but a counter-part of the insults they have dared to heap upon our government and citizens.

I have dwelt then, my friend, at some length upon the condition which the laboring poor of Great Britain presents to her philanthropists, from the fact, that from her borders first originated this crusade against American slavery; and I express my sincere belief, that the abolition of negro slavery in her West India colonies would never have been sanctioned by her statesmen, had they not believed it would tend to call off attention from the grinding oppression of the white race at their own doors, and create an agitation in this country which might eventuate in a dissolution of our Union. Let us then, tear the mask from these hypocritical philanthropists, and show to our countrymen, who are deluded by them, that it is not sympathy for the slave that has actuated them; but that it is the example of our free institutions, and the greatness and strength we exhibit to an admiring world, that has filled them with fear and trembling for the safety of their own. Well do they know if they embroil us in a civil war upon this slavery question, (a war that would cause us all, eventually, to sink exhausted into the arms of military despots,) that Constitutional Liberty becomes extinct upon the face of this globe. That the kings and despots of the earth will then sit securely upon their thrones, and a long night of centuries of oppression become the inheritance of their people.

Do not understand from all I have written, that I consider our system of negro slavery as entirely unexceptionable, or that it is even desirable in an economical point of view in all the slave States. But I do contend that the negro race have proved to be

happier, and in every respect better off as slaves, than when thrown upon their own resources. I also contend that slavery is neither a sin or a crime. As well might we condemn the relation of husband and wife, or parent and child, or civil ruler and the ruled, to be sinful and criminal. We daily see instances of shocking cruelty on the part of husbands and wives; of desertion and drunkenness, and of violence resulting even in death to the wife; yet who pretends to contend from these evils that the relation is sinful and criminal and ought at once to be abolished. Again. Some parents compel their children to haunts of vice and prostitution, to commit theft and other crimes, and yet no rational man would contend from these evils that no parent should exercise authority over the child. The same may be said of the civil ruler and the ruled. Restrictions upon our liberties and other evils attend upon all systems of government, and yet we know that government is not only sanctioned by the Bible, but is necessary for the happiness and well-being of our race. But this popular outcry of the abolitionists that slavery is a damning sin does not appear to have found favor with the great body of Christians at the North. It is enough for me to know that all the eminent commentators on the Bible are against them, and that our great denominations of Christian sects agree that slavery was clearly sanctioned by both the Old and New Testaments. Indeed, so plainly is this the case, that the only consistent abolitionists have rejected the Bible as a fable, and have flung their banner to the breeze with the motto, "Let the Bible fall, but not the rights of human nature."

But I have said that slavery was not desirable in an economical point of view. Slave labor in our northernmost slave States is acknowledged to be dear labor. Many of your people make as an

objection to slavery the fact, as they say, that the slave gets no wages. Was there ever an idea so preposterous? Hear what Professor Vethake says in his Political Economy, upon the subject of wages: "We must be careful not to confound the real wages of the laborer with his money wages. The latter as has been before stated, are only instrumental in procuring the former. The laborer who receives money for his services, exchanges it again for the necessaries and comforts of life, both of a material and immaterial nature, which he is enabled by means of it to obtain; and the money is only transitorily in his possession."--See Vethake's Polit. Econ. page 33.

The real wages of the laborer then are food, clothing, house-room and all the comforts and necessities of life. Now your most violent abolitionists are forced to admit, that our negro slaves are the most heartily fed, and most comfortably clad of any laboring population on the face of the earth. And this is not all. They enjoy many of the luxuries even of life. Upon my own plantation in a single year, the money made by the negroes in the holidays, and their own time, would furnish them with luxuries such as the free white laborer at the north does not often enjoy. The slaves in all this region, and I may safely say all over the south, are allowed to raise crops for themselves, for sale.-- Corn and poultry and vegetables, which they sell either to their masters or to the towns in their vicinity. Upon many of the river plantations they are allowed to cut cord wood, and sell to the steamboats, which gives to the industrious an opportunity of handling more money at the end of the year, than even the free laborers of any other country.

In the northern slave States it is proverbial that slaves consume more than they produce, and that in many instances they keep

the master poor; in a word that they receive more wages than they earn. Their food, clothing, house-rent, fuel, taxes, religious education, their support in infancy and old age, and medical attention, all impose an immense tax upon the master.

Now the English employer pays the laborer barely enough to keep body and soul together. If the laborer appropriates his wages in the purchase of comfortable clothing he must deny his muscles the stimulus of meat. If, on the contrary, his wages are expended in a sufficiency of food, rags scarce hide his nakedness. And thus millions toil on, until life's best energies are wasted, when they are "turned out" to meet a premature grave, or the wall of the pauper's prison, while expectant crowds are ever ready to fill their places, all glorying in the farce that their masters "dub them free-men."

Let me now go back to the tropics with which I started, the Fugitive Slave Bill, but which, I see, I must reserve for another letter. We will then take a cursory review of all that I have written. I have shown you then, that the mighty impetus given to the northern labor and capital in this country, has its foundations in our slave labor; and that, under the benign influences of our institutions, we present to the world a sublimity of greatness and strength, that is shaking the thrones of Europe. That Great Britain, alarmed for the stability of her government, has struck a gigantic blow in an attempt to prostrate us, by destroying the basis of our labor, and thus to transfer to her East India possessions all the productions of the tropics, which would enable her to monopolize the commerce of the world. I have shown you that in her East India colonies there are ten millions of slaves, and if you will read that parliamentary document to which Mr. Malcom refers, you will find them sunk to a dept of ignorance, degradation and want, com-

pared with which our slaves are princes. I have shown you the heart-rending picture which the laboring poor of Great Britain present to their philanthropists, and that to this day nothing has been done to emancipate either them or the slaves in the East. I have shown you that slavery is clearly sanctioned by the Bible, and that the abolition excitement had its origin in Great Britain, and that this excitement has been transferred to our own shores, and fed and fostered by British gold, with the unrighteous intention of undermining the glorious temple of American Constitutional Liberty.