

FANNY KEMBLE

JOURNAL OF A
RESIDENCE ON A
GEORGIAN PLANTATION:
1838-1839

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Kemble F.

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Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation: 1838-1839

PREFACE

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.

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 freeman—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 dependance 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 cannot 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 labourers, 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 cannot, 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 for ever. 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, labours, 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 labour 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 your's, 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 cotemporaries, 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 colour, 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 for ever 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 learnt 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 honour, 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 honour, highly principled, intelligent, well-educated, and accomplished, and (to speak 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 coloured 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 favoured descendants of European nations, whose qualities have been for centuries developing themselves under the beneficent influence 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 cannot 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 coloured 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 slaveowners 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 coloured 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 cannot 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 coloured 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 towards 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 civilised 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 enquiry 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 towards 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 labour 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 bye—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 enquiries, 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 neighbouring planters, 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 cauldrons, and the oldest wife of the settlement for officiating priestess. Pursuing my walk along the river's bank, upon an artificial dyke, 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 dyke—the river on 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 dykes 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 dyke, and which the people call salt-water bush. My walks are rather circumscribed, inasmuch as the dykes 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 huge 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-coloured 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 colour, size, and perfume are unrivalled 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 tyrannising 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 cannot 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. Nor, 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 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 duellist, 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 fineable offence 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 cannot 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 dairywoman, who churns for us; a laundrywoman; 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 encrusted 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, amongst 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 cannot 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 savour 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 ignorance 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 anything like neighbourly 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 laundrywoman, 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 anywhere 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 neighbouring 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 labour 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 honourable 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, &c, 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 anything 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 outhouse, 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 bed-room (a similarly elegant and comfortable chamber) by a dingy wooden partition covered all over with hooks, pegs, and nails, to which hats, caps, keys, &c. &c., 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 pretend to describe, as the shutting of a door is a process of extremely rare occurrence throughout the whole Southern country. The third room, 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 bed-room, the other his office or place of business; and the third, adjoining our bed-room, 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 woollen 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 splendours of a Southern slave residence. Our sole mode of summoning our attendants is by a packthread bell-rope suspended in the sitting-room. From the bed-rooms 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 labour, 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 labourer 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 labour 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 labourers are much upon the same footing as the labouring 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 South-western Slave States, I believe, task labour 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 labour) their whole number of slaves about once in seven years, and renew the whole stock. By the bye, 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' 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 labourer; 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 laboured 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 entrusted. 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-humoured 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 alablaster 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 't is 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 child-bearing and hard field labour, 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 cannot 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 towards 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 grey 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 a-field as soon as they recover from child labour), 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, &c., they first fell to laughing, and then imitating me. The encrustations of dirt on their hands, feet, and faces, were my next object of attack, and the stupid negro practice (by the bye, 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 travelled down the 'street,' in every dwelling endeavouring 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 cannot be but, from my words and actions, some revelations should reach these poor people; and going in and out amongst 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 colour 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 white washed wood, and contains four large-sized rooms. But how shall I describe to you the spectacle which was presented to me, on my 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 strewn 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 labour for us—those who, perhaps even yesterday, were being urged onto 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 child-birth, 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 dependants, 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 upwards.

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. Simons, upon which estate, from everything 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 further 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 favourite exercise on horseback upon these narrow dykes, 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 labour, 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 anything 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 bed-time, 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 white-washed walls of my bed-room, a most 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 cannot 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 tremblings 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 child bearing. 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 labour in the fields, unpaid labour, labour 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 anywhere 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 peri-pneumonia, 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 colour, 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 towards them and theirs; but, indeed, the Honourable 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 colouring 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 colour 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 offence; 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 pretence—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. Simons. 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 entrusted 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 towards 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 demeanour 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 towards 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 further 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 towards 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 enclosure, and I ventured no further 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 dykes 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. Simons, fifteen miles from this place, further 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 flavour; 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 bye, 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 footpath 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 cannot 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 blackbirds. 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 enquiries 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 favour, even at the expense of strangling the intense natural longing 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 the 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 offence, and sought by eager protestations of his delighted acquiescence in slavery, to conceal his soul's natural yearning, lest I should resent it. 'T was 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 anything they said to me, I must leave the place, as I could not but hear their complaints, and endeavour, 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 enquiry 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 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.

Towards 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 upwards 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 splendour 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 boat's side, with one's head broken off, with looking adoringly upwards, 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 cannot 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 burthens, 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 labour, 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 for ever!'

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 woollen cloth, of a dark grey or blue colour, which resembles 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 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 your's 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 covering 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 meet 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 colour, a dusky, greyish 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-coloured 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 anywhere else, I should have taken him for a southern European, or, perhaps, in favour 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 demarcation, imperceptible shades of different respectability, and delicate divisions of genteel, genteeler, genteelest. 'For me,' added the worthy doctor, 'I cannot 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-humour. 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, &c., &c., &c.—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, &c. 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 pretence at physical indulgences (such as they are), bestowed apparently voluntarily upon their dependants. 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 neighbourhood, 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 worshippers, for they follow her as such, and saw, with dismay, 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 cannot conceive anything 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, ribbands, combs stuck in their woolly heads, as if they held up any portion of the stiff and ungovernable hair, filthy finery, every colour 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. Simons 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 Major —'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 labour continues, of course, as long as she is so burthened. 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 civilised 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 goodwill. 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-coloured 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-waggon 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, &c. 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 straight-forwardness, 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 slave holder, 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 slave holders 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 ear-ache. 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 anything 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, Doctor C— desired him to bind round his knee the leaves of the tulip-tree—poplar, I believe you call it—saying that he had learnt 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 enquiry, 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. Anything, however, much more helpless and inefficient than these poor ignorant creatures you cannot 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 selfsame 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 labouring hard all day upon *two meals* of Indian corn or hominy? 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 towards 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 labour is over, having worked, at the *very least*, six hours without intermission of rest or refreshment since their noon-day meal (properly so called, for 'tis meal, and nothing else). Those that I passed to-day, sitting on their doorsteps, 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 doorsteps, 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 eatings 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 anything 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 labour. 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 labours in the field or the mill. After this description of the meals of our labourers, 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 bed-rooms, and the servant's 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 table, 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, strewn 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 licence to which they capriciously permit their favourite 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 lap-dog 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 favouritism to the few—a system of favouritism 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 practised upon his fellows. I had several of these favourite 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 goodwill 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 favoured 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 towards 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 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 awhile over the river, and then sailing slowly towards 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 dyke, 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, and so 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 parlour 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 meantime 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 neighbourhood, 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 hires and for Irish labourers. 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 meantime, 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 towards 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 labour 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 enquired 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 key-hole, 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 degree. 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 endeavour 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 neighbourhood of the town, and whose slaves are notoriously ill-treated; reminding Mr. – of the precious souls of his human cattle, and requesting a further 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 afterwards. '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 bed-room, or the parlour, 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 labour 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 towards 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 honourable dealing by everybody 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 intelligence 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 storehouses. 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 labours 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. Labour 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 semi-starvation and barbarism to the degradation of doing anything 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 labour belongs to blacks and slaves alone here), labour 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 labour 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-labourers. 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 burthens 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—gypsies, 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.' Further 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 hindrance, 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 cannot extricate themselves. All this I thought might be true, before I went to the south, and often has the charitable supposition 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 dykes, 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 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 8,542 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 over work, 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 labour, to what he then seemed, setting forth to these wretched, ignorant women, as a duty, their unpaid exacted labour! 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 slave holding are so unmanly, letting alone every other consideration, that I know not how anyone, 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 civilisation 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 honour. 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 Newhaven 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 mention 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 dyke, in the midst of which interesting pursuit I was interrupted by a visit from Mr. B—, a neighbouring 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 honour 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 piccaninny! 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 children 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 enquiring 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 everything, from coloured calicoes for negro dresses to pianofortes (one of which, for curiosity sake, I enquired 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 judgement 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 unhanged, 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 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 baptised. 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*

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