

CHARLES BALL

FIFTY YEARS IN CHAINS;
OR, THE LIFE OF AN
AMERICAN SLAVE

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Life of an American Slave

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Содержание

PREFACE	4
CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	19
CHAPTER III	40
CHAPTER IV	60
CHAPTER V	77
CHAPTER VI	91
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	93

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PREFACE

The story which follows is *true* in every particular. Responsible citizens of a neighboring State can vouch for the reality of the narrative. The language of the slave has not at all times been strictly adhered to, as a half century of bondage unfitted him for literary work. The subject of the story *is still a slave* by the laws of this country, and it would not be wise to reveal his name.

CHAPTER I

SEPARATED FROM MY MOTHER

My story is a true one, and I shall tell it in a simple style. It will be merely a recital of my life as a slave in the Southern States of the Union – a description of negro slavery in the "model Republic."

My grandfather was brought from Africa and sold as a slave in Calvert county, in Maryland. I never understood the name of the ship in which he was imported, nor the name of the planter who bought him on his arrival, but at the time I knew him he was a slave in a family called Maud, who resided near Leonardtown. My father was a slave in a family named Hauty, living near the same place. My mother was the slave of a tobacco planter, who died when I was about four years old. My mother had several children, and they were sold upon master's death to separate purchasers. She was sold, my father told me, to a Georgia trader. I, of all her children, was the only one left in Maryland. When sold I was naked, never having had on clothes in my life, but my new master gave me a child's frock, belonging to one of his own children. After he had purchased me, he dressed me in this garment, took me before him on his horse, and started home;

but my poor mother, when she saw me leaving her for the last time, ran after me, took me down from the horse, clasped me in her arms, and wept loudly and bitterly over me. My master seemed to pity her, and endeavored to soothe her distress by telling her that he would be a good master to me, and that I should not want anything. She then, still holding me in her arms, walked along the road beside the horse as he moved slowly, and earnestly and imploringly besought my master to buy her and the rest of her children, and not permit them to be carried away by the negro buyers; but whilst thus entreating him to save her and her family, the slave-driver, who had first bought her, came running in pursuit of her with a raw-hide in his hand. When he overtook us, he told her he was her master now, and ordered her to give that little negro to its owner, and come back with him.

My mother then turned to him and cried, "Oh, master, do not take me from my child!" Without making any reply, he gave her two or three heavy blows on the shoulders with his raw-hide, snatched me from her arms, handed me to my master, and seizing her by one arm, dragged her back towards the place of sale. My master then quickened the pace of his horse; and as we advanced, the cries of my poor parent became more and more indistinct – at length they died away in the distance, and I never again heard the voice of my poor mother. Young as I was, the horrors of that day sank deeply into my heart, and even at this time, though half a century has elapsed, the terrors of the scene return with painful vividness upon my memory. Frightened at the sight of the

cruelties inflicted upon my poor mother, I forgot my own sorrows at parting from her and clung to my new master, as an angel and a saviour, when compared with the hardened fiend into whose power she had fallen. She had been a kind and good mother to me; had warmed me in her bosom in the cold nights of winter, and had often divided the scanty pittance of food allowed her by her mistress, between my brothers, and sisters, and me, and gone supperless to bed herself. Whatever victuals she could obtain beyond the coarse food, salt fish and corn bread, allowed to slaves on the Patuxent and Potomac rivers, she carefully distributed among her children, and treated us with all the tenderness which her own miserable condition would permit. I have no doubt that she was chained and driven to Carolina, and toiled out the residue of a forlorn and famished existence in the rice swamps, or indigo fields of the South.

My father never recovered from the effects of the shock, which this sudden and overwhelming ruin of his family gave him. He had formerly been of a gay, social temper, and when he came to see us on a Saturday night, he always brought us some little present, such as the means of a poor slave would allow – apples, melons, sweet potatoes, or, if he could procure nothing else, a little parched corn, which tasted better in our cabin, because he had brought it.

He spent the greater part of the time, which his master permitted him to pass with us, in relating such stories as he had learned from his companions, or in singing the rude songs

common amongst the slaves of Maryland and Virginia. After this time I never heard him laugh heartily, or sing a song. He became gloomy and morose in his temper, to all but me; and spent nearly all his leisure time with my grandfather, who claimed kindred with some royal family in Africa, and had been a great warrior in his native country. The master of my father was a hard, penurious man, and so exceedingly avaricious, that he scarcely allowed himself the common conveniences of life. A stranger to sensibility, he was incapable of tracing the change in the temper and deportment of my father, to its true cause; but attributed it to a sullen discontent with his condition as a slave, and a desire to abandon his service, and seek his liberty by escaping to some of the free States. To prevent the perpetration of this suspected crime of *running away from slavery*, the old man resolved to sell my father to a southern slave-dealer, and accordingly applied to one of those men, who was at that time in Calvert, to become the purchaser. The price was agreed on, but, as my father was a very strong, active, and resolute man, it was deemed unsafe for the Georgian to attempt to seize him, even with the aid of others, in the day-time, when he was at work, as it was known he carried upon his person a large knife. It was therefore determined to secure him by stratagem, and for this purpose, a farmer in the neighborhood, who was made privy to the plan, alleged that he had lost a pig, which must have been stolen by some one, and that he suspected my father to be the thief. A constable was employed to arrest him, but as he was afraid to undertake the

business alone, he called on his way, at the house of the master of my grandfather, to procure assistance from the overseer of the plantation. When he arrived at the house, the overseer was at the barn, and thither he repaired to make his application. At the end of the barn was the coach-house, and as the day was cool, to avoid the wind which was high, the two walked to the side of the coach-house to talk over the matter, and settle their plan of operations. It so happened that my grandfather, whose business it was to keep the coach in good condition, was at work at this time, rubbing the plated handles of the doors, and brightening the other metallic parts of the vehicle. Hearing the voice of the overseer without, he suspended his work, and listening attentively, became a party to their councils. They agreed that they would delay the execution of their project until the next day, as it was then late. They supposed they would have no difficulty in apprehending their intended victim, as, knowing himself innocent of the theft, he would readily consent to go with the constable to a justice of the peace, to have the charge examined. That night, however, about midnight, my grandfather silently repaired to the cabin of my father, a distance of about three miles, aroused him from his sleep, made him acquainted with the extent of his danger, gave him a bottle of cider and a small bag of parched corn, and then enjoined him to fly from the destination which awaited him. In the morning the Georgian could not find his newly purchased slave, who was never seen or heard of in Maryland from that day.

After the flight of my father, my grandfather was the only

person left in Maryland with whom I could claim kindred. He was an old man, nearly eighty years old, he said, and he manifested all the fondness for me that I could expect from one so old. He was feeble, and his master required but little work from him. He always expressed contempt for his fellow-slaves, for when young, he was an African of rank in his native land. He had a small cabin of his own, with half an acre of ground attached to it, which he cultivated on his own account, and from which he drew a large share of his sustenance. He had singular religious notions – never going to meeting or caring for the preachers he could, if he would, occasionally hear. He retained his native traditions respecting the Deity and hereafter. It is not strange that he believed the religion of his oppressors to be the invention of designing men, for the text oftenest quoted in his hearing was, "Servants, be obedient to your masters."

The name of the man who purchased me at the vendue, and became my master, was John Cox; but he was generally called Jack Cox. He was a man of kindly feelings towards his family, and treated his slaves, of whom he had several besides me, with humanity. He permitted my grandfather to visit me as often as he pleased, and allowed him sometimes to carry me to his own cabin, which stood in a lonely place, at the head of a deep hollow, almost surrounded by a thicket of cedar trees, which had grown up in a worn out and abandoned tobacco field. My master gave me better clothes than the little slaves of my age generally received in Calvert, and often told me that he intended to make

me his waiter, and that if I behaved well I should become his overseer in time. These stations of waiter and overseer appeared to me to be the highest points of honor and greatness in the whole world, and had not circumstances frustrated my master's plans, as well as my own views, I should probably have been living at this time in a cabin on the corner of some tobacco plantation.

Fortune had decreed otherwise. When I was about twelve years old, my master, Jack Cox, died of a disease which had long confined him to the house. I was sorry for the death of my master, who had always been kind to me; and I soon discovered that I had good cause to regret his departure from this world. He had several children at the time of his death, who were all young; the oldest being about my own age. The father of my late master, who was still living, became administrator of his estate, and took possession of his property, and amongst the rest, of myself. This old gentleman treated me with the greatest severity, and compelled me to work very hard on his plantation for several years, until I suppose I must have been near or quite twenty years of age. As I was always very obedient, and ready to execute all his orders, I did not receive much whipping, but suffered greatly for want of sufficient and proper food. My master allowed his slaves a peck of corn, each, per week, throughout the year; and this we had to grind into meal in a hand-mill for ourselves. We had a tolerable supply of meat for a short time, about the month of December, when he killed his hogs. After that season we had meat once a week, unless bacon became scarce, which very often

happened, in which case we had no meat at all. However, as we fortunately lived near both the Patuxent river and the Chesapeake Bay, we had abundance of fish in the spring, and as long as the fishing season continued. After that period, each slave received, in addition to his allowance of corn, one salt herring every day.

My master gave me one pair of shoes, one pair of stockings, one hat, one jacket of coarse cloth, two coarse shirts, and two pair of trowsers, yearly. He allowed me no other clothes. In the winter time I often suffered very much from the cold; as I had to drive the team of oxen which hauled the tobacco to market, and frequently did not get home until late at night, the distance being considerable, and my cattle traveled very slow.

One Saturday evening, when I came home from the corn field, my master told me that he had hired me out for a year at the city of Washington, and that I would have to live at the Navy Yard.

On the New Year's day following, which happened about two weeks afterwards, my master set forward for Washington, on horseback, and ordered me to accompany him on foot. It was night when we arrived at the Navy Yard, and everything appeared very strange to me.

I was told by a gentleman who had epaulets on his shoulders, that I must go on board a large ship, which lay in the river. He at the same time told a boy to show me the way. This ship proved to be a frigate, and I was told that I had been brought there to cook for the people belonging to her. In the course of a few days the duties of my station became quite familiar to me; and in

the enjoyment of a profusion of excellent provisions, I felt very happy. I strove by all means to please the officers and gentlemen who came on board, and in this I soon found my account. One gave me a half-worn coat, another an old shirt, and a third, a cast off waistcoat and pantaloons. Some presented me with small sums of money, and in this way I soon found myself well clothed, and with more than a dollar in my pocket. My duties, though constant, were not burthensome, and I was permitted to spend Sunday afternoon in my own way. I generally went up into the city to see the new and splendid buildings; often walked as far as Georgetown, and made many new acquaintances among the slaves, and frequently saw large numbers of people of my color chained together in long trains, and driven off towards the South. At that time the slave-trade was not regarded with so much indignation and disgust, as it is now. It was a rare thing to hear of a person of color running away, and escaping altogether from his master: my father being the only one within my knowledge, who had, before this time, obtained his liberty in this manner, in Calvert county; and, as before stated, I never heard what became of him after his flight.

I remained on board the frigate, and about the Navy Yard, two years, and was quite satisfied with my lot, until about three months before the expiration of this period, when it so happened that a schooner, loaded with iron and other materials for the use of the yard, arrived from Philadelphia. She came and lay close by the frigate, to discharge her cargo, and amongst her crew I

observed a black man, with whom, in the course of a day or two, I became acquainted. He told me he was free, and lived in Philadelphia, where he kept a house of entertainment for sailors, which, he said, was attended to in his absence by his wife.

His description of Philadelphia, and of the liberty enjoyed there by the black people, so charmed my imagination that I determined to devise some plan of escaping from the frigate, and making my way to the North. I communicated my designs to my new friend, who promised to give me his aid. We agreed that the night before the schooner should sail, I was to be concealed in the hold, amongst a parcel of loose tobacco, which, he said, the captain had undertaken to carry to Philadelphia. The sailing of the schooner was delayed longer than we expected; and, finally, her captain purchased a cargo of flour in Georgetown, and sailed for the West Indies. Whilst I was anxiously awaiting some other opportunity of making my way to Philadelphia, (the idea of crossing the country to the western part of Pennsylvania, never entered my mind,) New Year's day came, and with it came my old master from Calvert, accompanied by a gentleman named Gibson, to whom, he said, he had sold me, and to whom he delivered me over in the Navy Yard. We all three set out that same evening for Calvert, and reached the residence of my new master the next day. Here, I was informed, that I had become the subject of a law-suit. My new master claimed me under his purchase from old Mr. Cox; and another gentleman of the neighborhood, named Levin Ballard, had bought me of the

children of my former master, Jack Cox. This suit continued in the courts of Calvert county more than two years; but was finally decided in favor of him who had bought me of the children.

I went home with my master, Mr. Gibson, who was a farmer, and with whom I lived three years. Soon after I came to live with Mr. Gibson, I married a girl of color named Judah, the slave of a gentleman by the name of Symmes, who resided in the same neighborhood. I was at the house of Mr. Symmes every week; and became as well acquainted with him and his family, as I was with my master.

Mr. Symmes also married a wife about the time I did. The lady whom he married lived near Philadelphia, and when she first came to Maryland, she refused to be served by a black chambermaid, but employed a white girl, the daughter of a poor man, who lived near. The lady was reported to be very wealthy, and brought a large trunk full of plate and other valuable articles. This trunk was so heavy that I could scarcely carry it, and it impressed my mind with the idea of great riches in the owner, at that time. After some time Mrs. Symmes dismissed her white chambermaid and placed my wife in that situation, which I regarded as a fortunate circumstance, as it insured her good food, and at least one good suit of clothes.

The Symmes' family was one of the most ancient in Maryland, and had been a long time resident in Calvert county. The grounds had been laid out, and all the improvements projected about the family abode, in a style of much magnificence, according to the

custom of the old aristocracy of Maryland and Virginia.

Appendant to the domicile, and at no great distance from the house, was a family vault, built of brick, in which reposed the occupants of the estate, who had lived there for many previous generations. This vault had not been opened or entered for fifteen years previous to the time of which I speak; but it so happened, that at this period, a young man, a distant relation of the family, died, having requested on his death-bed, that he might be buried in this family resting place. When I came on Saturday evening to see my wife and child, Mr. Symmes desired me, as I was older than any of his black men, to take an iron pick and go and open the vault, which I accordingly did, by cutting away the mortar, and removing a few bricks from one side of the building; but I could not remove more than three or four bricks before I was obliged, by the horrid effluvia which issued at the aperture, to retire. It was the most deadly and sickening scent that I have ever smelled, and I could not return to complete the work until after the sun had risen the next day, when I pulled down so much of one of the side walls, as to permit persons to walk in upright. I then went in alone, and examined this house of the dead, and surely no picture could more strongly and vividly depict the emptiness of all earthly vanity, and the nothingness of human pride. Dispersed over the floor lay the fragments of more than twenty human skeletons, each in the place where it had been deposited by the idle tenderness of surviving friends. In some cases nothing remained but the hair and the larger bones, whilst

in several the form of the coffin was yet visible, with all the bones resting in their proper places. One coffin, the sides of which were yet standing, the lid only having decayed and partly fallen in, so as to disclose the contents of this narrow cell, presented a peculiarly moving spectacle. Upon the centre of the lid was a large silver plate, and the head and foot were adorned with silver stars. — The nails which had united the parts of the coffin had also silver heads. Within lay the skeletons of a mother and her infant child, in slumbers only to be broken by the peal of the last trumpet. The bones of the infant lay upon the breast of the mother, where the hands of affection had shrouded them. The ribs of the parent had fallen down, and rested on the back bone. Many gold rings were about the bones of the fingers. Brilliant ear-rings lay beneath where the ears had been; and a glittering gold chain encircled the ghastly and haggard vertebræ of a once beautiful neck. The shroud and flesh had disappeared, but the hair of the mother appeared strong and fresh. Even the silken locks of the infant were still preserved. Behold the end of youth and beauty, and of all that is lovely in life! The coffin was so much decayed that it could not be removed. A thick and dismal vapor hung embodied from the roof and walls of this charnel house, in appearance somewhat like a mass of dark cobwebs; but which was impalpable to the touch, and when stirred by the hand vanished away. On the second day we deposited with his kindred, the corpse of the young man, and at night I again carefully closed up the breach which I had made in the walls of this dwelling-

place of the dead.

CHAPTER II

Some short time after my wife became chambermaid to her mistress, it was my misfortune to change masters once more. Levin Ballard, who, as before stated, had purchased me of the children of my former master, Jack Cox, was successful in his law suit with Mr. Gibson, the object of which was to determine the right of property in me; and one day, whilst I was at work in the corn-field, Mr. Ballard came and told me I was his property; asking me at the same time if I was willing to go with him. I told him I was not willing to go; but that if I belonged to him I knew I must. We then went to the house, and Mr. Gibson not being at home, Mrs. Gibson told me I must go with Mr. Ballard.

I accordingly went with him, determining to serve him obediently and faithfully. I remained in his service almost three years, and as he lived near the residence of my wife's master, my former mode of life was not materially changed, by this change of home.

Mrs. Symmes spent much of her time in exchanging visits with the families of the other large planters, both in Calvert and the neighboring counties; and through my wife, I became acquainted with the private family history of many of the principal persons in Maryland.

There was a great proprietor, who resided in another county, who owned several hundred slaves; and who permitted them

to beg of travelers on the high-way. This same gentleman had several daughters, and according to the custom of the time, kept what they called open house: that is, his house was free to all persons of genteel appearance, who chose to visit it. The young ladies were supposed to be the greatest fortunes in the country, were reputed beautiful, and consequently were greatly admired.

Two gentlemen, who were lovers of these girls, desirous of amusing their mistresses, invited a young man, whose standing in society they supposed to be beneath theirs, to go with them to the manor, as it was called. When there, they endeavored to make him an object of ridicule, in presence of the ladies; but he so well acquitted himself, and manifested such superior wit and talents, that one of the young ladies fell in love with him, and soon after wrote him a letter, which led to their marriage. His two pretended friends were never afterwards countenanced by the family, as gentlemen of honor; but the fortunate husband avenged himself of his heartless companions, by inviting them to his wedding, and exposing them to the observation of the vast assemblage of fashionable people, who always attended a marriage, in the family of a great planter.

The two gentlemen, who had been thus made to fall into the pit that they had dug for another, were so much chagrined at the issue of the adventure, that one soon left Maryland; and the other became a common drunkard, and died a few years afterwards.

My change of masters realized all the evil apprehensions which I had entertained. I found Mr. Ballard sullen and crabbed

in his temper, and always prone to find fault with my conduct – no matter how hard I had labored, or how careful I was to fulfil all his orders, and obey his most unreasonable commands. Yet, it so happened, that he never beat me, for which, I was altogether indebted to the good character, for industry, sobriety and humility, which I had established in the neighborhood. I think he was ashamed to abuse me, lest he should suffer in the good opinion of the public; for he often fell into the most violent fits of anger against me, and overwhelmed me with coarse and abusive language. He did not give me clothes enough to keep me warm in winter, and compelled me to work in the woods, when there was deep snow on the ground, by which I suffered very much. I had determined at last to speak to him to sell me to some person in the neighborhood, so that I might still be near my wife and children – but a different fate awaited me.

My master kept a store at a small village on the bank of the Patuxent river, called B – , although he resided at some distance on a farm. One morning he rose early, and ordered me to take a yoke of oxen and go to the village, to bring home a cart which was there, saying he would follow me. He arrived at the village soon after I did, and took his breakfast with his store-keeper. He then told me to come into the house and get my breakfast. Whilst I was eating in the kitchen, I observed him talking earnestly, but low, to a stranger near the kitchen door. I soon after went out, and hitched my oxen to the cart, and was about to drive off, when several men came round about me, and amongst them the

stranger whom I had seen speaking with my master. This man came up to me, and, seizing me by the collar, shook me violently, saying I was his property, and must go with him to Georgia. At the sound of these words, the thoughts of my wife and children rushed across my mind, and my heart beat away within me. I saw and knew that my case was hopeless, and that resistance was vain, as there were near twenty persons present, all of whom were ready to assist the man by whom I was kidnapped. I felt incapable of weeping or speaking, and in my despair I laughed loudly. My purchaser ordered me to cross my hands behind, which were quickly bound with a strong cord; and he then told me that we must set out that very day for the South. I asked if I could not be allowed to go to see my wife and children, or if this could not be permitted, if they might not have leave to come to see me; but was told that I would be able to get another wife in Georgia.

My new master, whose name I did not hear, took me that same day across the Patuxent, where I joined fifty-one other slaves, whom he had bought in Maryland. Thirty-two of these were men, and nineteen were women. The women were merely tied together with a rope, about the size of a bed-cord, which was tied like a halter round the neck of each; but the men, of whom I was the stoutest and strongest, were very differently caparisoned. A strong iron collar was closely fitted by means of a padlock round each of our necks. A chain of iron, about a hundred feet in length, was passed through the hasp of each padlock, except at the two ends, where the hasps of the padlock passed through a link of the

chain. In addition to this, we were handcuffed in pairs, with iron staples and bolts, with a short chain, about a foot long, uniting the handcuffs and their wearers in pairs. In this manner we were chained alternately by the right and left hand; and the poor man to whom I was thus ironed, wept like an infant when the blacksmith, with his heavy hammer, fastened the ends of the bolts that kept the staples from slipping from our arms. For my own part, I felt indifferent to my fate. It appeared to me that the worst had come that could come, and that no change of fortune could harm me.

After we were all chained and handcuffed together, we sat down upon the ground; and here reflecting upon the sad reverse of fortune that had so suddenly overtaken me, I became weary of life, and bitterly execrated the day I was born. It seemed that I was destined by fate to drink the cup of sorrow to the very dregs, and that I should find no respite from misery but in the grave. I longed to die, and escape from the hands of my tormentors; but even the wretched privilege of destroying myself was denied me, for I could not shake off my chains, nor move a yard without the consent of my master. Reflecting in silence upon my forlorn condition, I at length concluded that as things could not become worse – and as the life of man is but a continued round of changes, they must, of necessity, take a turn in my favor at some future day. I found relief in this vague and indefinite hope, and when we received orders to go on board the scow, which was to transport us over the Patuxent, I marched down to the water with a firmness of purpose of which I did not believe myself capable,

a few minutes before.

We were soon on the south side of the river, and taking up our line of march, we traveled about five miles that evening, and stopped for the night at one of those miserable public houses, so frequent in the lower parts of Maryland and Virginia, called "*ordinaries*."

Our master ordered a pot of mush to be made for our supper; after despatching which we all lay down on the naked floor to sleep in our handcuffs and chains. The women, my fellow-slaves, lay on one side of the room; and the men who were chained with me, occupied the other. I slept but little this night, which I passed in thinking of my wife and little children, whom I could not hope ever to see again. I also thought of my grandfather, and of the long nights I had passed with him, listening to his narratives of the scenes through which he had passed in Africa. I at length fell asleep, but was distressed by painful dreams. My wife and children appeared to be weeping and lamenting my calamity; and beseeching and imploring my master on their knees, not to carry me away from them. My little boy came and begged me not to go and leave him, and endeavored, as I thought, with his little hands to break the fetters that bound me. I awoke in agony and cursed my existence. I could not pray, for the measure of my woes seemed to be full, and I felt as if there was no mercy in heaven, nor compassion on earth, for a man who was born a slave. Day at length came, and with the dawn, we resumed our journey towards the Potomac. As we passed along the road, I saw the

slaves at work in the corn and tobacco fields. I knew they toiled hard and lacked food; but they were not, like me, dragged in chains from their wives, children and friends. Compared with me, they were the happiest of mortals. I almost envied them their blessed lot.

Before night we crossed the Potomac, at Hoe's Ferry, and bade farewell to Maryland. At night we stopped at the house of a poor gentleman, at least he appeared to wish my master to consider him a gentleman; and he had no difficulty in establishing his claim to poverty. He lived at the side, of the road, in a framed house, which had never been plastered within – the weather-boards being the only wall. He had about fifty acres of land enclosed by a fence, the remains of a farm which had once covered two or three hundred acres; but the cedar bushes had encroached upon all sides, until the cultivation had been confined to its present limits. The land was the picture of sterility, and there was neither barn nor stable on the place. The owner was ragged, and his wife and children were in a similar plight. It was with difficulty that we obtained a bushel of corn, which our master ordered us to parch at a fire made in the yard, and to eat for our supper. Even this miserable family possessed two slaves, half-starved, half-naked wretches, whose appearance bespoke them familiar with hunger, and victims of the lash; but yet there was one pang which they had not known – they had not been chained and driven from their parents or children, into hopeless exile.

We left this place early in the morning, and directed our course toward the south-west; our master riding beside us, and hastening our march, sometimes by words of encouragement, and sometimes by threats of punishment. The women took their place in the rear of our line. We halted about nine o'clock for breakfast, and received as much corn-bread as we could eat, together with a plate of boiled herrings, and about three pounds of pork amongst us. Before we left this place, I was removed from near the middle of the chain, and placed at the front end of it; so that I now became the leader of the file, and held this post of honor until our irons were taken from us, near the town of Columbia in South Carolina. We continued our route this day along the high road between the Potomac and Rappahannock; and I saw each of those rivers several times before night. Our master gave us no dinner to-day, but we halted and got as much corn-mush and sour milk as we could eat for supper. The weather grew mild and pleasant, and we needed no more fires at night.

From this time we all slept promiscuously, men and women on the floors of such houses as we chanced to stop at. We passed on through Bowling Green, a quiet village.

Time did not reconcile me to my chains, but it made me familiar with them. I reflected on my desperate situation with a degree of calmness, hoping that I might be able to devise some means of escape. My master placed a particular value upon me, for I heard him tell a tavern-keeper that if he had me in Georgia he could get eight hundred dollars for me, but he had bought me

for his brother, and believed he should not sell me; he afterwards changed his mind, however. I carefully examined every part of our chain, but found no place where it could be separated.

We all had as much corn-bread as we could eat, procured of our owner at the places we stopped at for the night. In addition to this we usually had a salt herring every day. On Sunday we had a quarter of a pound of bacon each.

We continued our course up the country westward for a few days and then turned South, crossed James river above Richmond, as I heard at the time. After more than four weeks of travel we entered South Carolina near Camden, and for the first time I saw a field of cotton in bloom.

As we approached the Yadkin river the tobacco disappeared from the fields and the cotton plant took its place as an article of general culture.

I was now a slave in South Carolina, and had no hope of ever again seeing my wife and children. I had at times serious thoughts of suicide so great was my anguish. If I could have got a rope I should have hanged myself at Lancaster. The thought of my wife and children I had been torn from in Maryland, and the dreadful undefined future which was before me, came near driving me mad. It was long after midnight before I fell asleep, but the most pleasant dream, succeeded to these sorrowful forebodings. I thought I had escaped my master, and through great difficulties made my way back to Maryland, and was again in my wife's cabin with my little children on my lap. Every object was so vividly

impressed on my mind in this dream, that when I awoke, a firm conviction settled upon my mind, that by some means, at present incomprehensible to me, I should yet again embrace my wife, and caress my children in their humble dwelling. Early in the morning, our master called us up; and distributed to each of the party a cake made of corn-meal and a small piece of bacon. On our journey, we had only eaten twice a day, and had not received breakfast until about nine o'clock; but he said this morning meal was given to welcome us to South Carolina. He then addressed us all, and told us we might now give up all hope of ever returning to the places of our nativity; as it would be impossible for us to pass through the States of North Carolina and Virginia, without being taken up and sent back. He further advised us to make ourselves contented, as he would take us to Georgia, a far better country than any we had seen; and where we would be able to live in the greatest abundance. About sunrise we took up our march on the road to Columbia, as we were told. Hitherto our master had not offered to sell any of us, and had even refused to stop to talk to any one on the subject of our sale, although he had several times been addressed on this point, before we reached Lancaster; but soon after we departed from this village, we were overtaken on the road by a man on horseback, who accosted our driver by asking him if his *niggars* were for sale. The latter replied, that he believed he would not sell any yet, as he was on his way to Georgia, and cotton being now much in demand, he expected to obtain high prices for us from persons who were going to settle in

the new purchase. He, however, contrary to his custom, ordered us to stop, and told the stranger he might look at us, and that he would find us as fine a lot of hands as were ever imported into the country – that we were all prime property, and he had no doubt would command his own prices in Georgia.

The stranger, who was a thin, weather-beaten, sun-burned figure, then said, he wanted a couple of breeding wenches, and would give as much for them as they would bring in Georgia – that he had lately heard from Augusta, and that *niggers* were not higher there than in Columbia, and, as he had been in Columbia the week before, he knew what *niggers* were worth. He then walked along our line, as we stood chained together, and looked at the whole of us – then turning to the women, asked the prices of the two pregnant ones. Our master replied, that these were two of the best breeding-wenches in all Maryland – that one was twenty-two, and the other only nineteen – that the first was already the mother of seven children, and the other of four – that he had himself seen the children at the time he bought their mothers – and that such wenches would be cheap at a thousand dollars each; but as they were not able to keep up with the gang, he would take twelve hundred dollars for the two. The purchaser said this was too much, but that he would give nine hundred dollars for the pair. This price was promptly refused; but our master, after some consideration, said he was willing to sell a bargain in these wenches, and would take eleven hundred dollars for them, which was objected to on the other side; and

many faults and failings were pointed out in the merchandise. After much bargaining, and many gross jests on the part of the stranger, he offered a thousand dollars for the two, and said he would give no more. He then mounted his horse, and moved off; but after he had gone about one hundred yards, he was called back; and our master said, if he would go with him to the next blacksmith's shop on the road to Columbia, and pay for taking the irons off the rest of us, he might have the two women.

This proposal was agreed to, and as it was now about nine o'clock, we were ordered to hasten on to the next house, where, we were told, we must stop for breakfast. At this place we were informed that it was ten miles to the next smith's shop, and our new acquaintance was obliged by the terms of his contract, to accompany us thither. We received for breakfast, about a pint of boiled rice to each person, and after this was despatched, we again took to the road, eager to reach the blacksmith's shop, at which we expected to be relieved of the iron rings and chains, which had so long galled and worried us. About two o'clock we arrived at the longed-for residence of the smith; but, on inquiry, our master was informed that he was not at home, and would not return before evening. Here a controversy arose, whether we should all remain here until the smith returned, or the stranger should go on with us to the next smithery, which was said to be only five miles distant. This was a point not easily settled between two such spirits as our master and the stranger; both of whom had been overseers in their time, and both of whom had risen to

the rank of proprietors of slaves.

The matter had already produced angry words, and much vaunting on the part of the stranger; – "that a freeman of South Carolina was not to be imposed upon; that by the constitution of the State, his rights were sacred, and he was not to be deprived of his liberty, at the arbitrary will of a man just from amongst the Yankees, and who had brought with him to the South as many Yankee tricks as he had *niggers*, and he believed many more." He then swore, that "all the *niggers* in the drove were Yankee *niggers*."

"When I *overseed* for Colonel Polk," said he, "on his rice plantation, he had two Yankee *niggers* that he brought from Maryland, and they were running away every day. I gave them a hundred lashes more than a dozen times; but they never quit running away, till I chained them together, with iron collars round their necks, and chained them to spades, and made them do nothing but dig ditches to drain the rice swamps. They could not run away then, unless they went together, and carried their chains and spades with them. I kept them in this way two years, and better *niggers* I never had. One of them died one night, and the other was never good for anything after he lost his mate. He never ran away afterwards, but he died too, after a while." He then addressed himself to the two women, whose master he had become, and told them that if ever they ran away, he would treat them in the same way. Wretched as I was myself, my heart bled for these poor creatures, who had fallen into the hands of a

tiger in human form. The dispute between the two masters was still raging, when, unexpectedly, the blacksmith rode up to his house, on a thin, bony-looking horse, and dismounting, asked his wife what these gentlemen were making such a *frolick* about. I did not hear her answer, but both the disputants turned and addressed themselves to the smith – the one to know what price he would demand to take the irons off all these *niggers*, and the other to know how long it would take him to perform the work. It is here proper for me to observe, that there are many phrases of language in common use in Carolina and Georgia, which are applied in a way that would not be understood by persons from one of the Northern States. For instance, when several persons are quarrelling, brawling, making a great noise, or even fighting, they say, "*the gentlemen are frolicking!*" I heard many other terms equally strange, whilst I resided in the southern country, amongst such white people as I became acquainted with; though my acquaintance was confined, in a great measure, to overseers, and such people as did not associate with the rich planters and great families.

The smith at length agreed to take the irons from the whole of us for two dollars and fifty cents, and immediately set about it, with the air of indifference that he would have manifested in tearing a pair of old shoes from the hoofs of a wagon-horse. It was four weeks and five days, from the time my irons had been riveted upon me, until they were removed, and great as had been my sufferings whilst chained to my fellow-slaves, I

cannot say that I felt any pleasure in being released from my long confinement; for I knew that my liberation was only preparatory to my final, and, as I feared, perpetual subjugation to the power of some such monster, as the one then before me, who was preparing to drive away the two unfortunate women whom he had purchased, and whose life's-blood he had acquired the power of shedding at pleasure, for the sum of a thousand dollars. After we were released from our chains, our master sold the whole lot of irons, which we had borne from Maryland, to the blacksmith, for seven dollars.

The smith then procured a bottle of rum, and treated his two new acquaintances to a part of its contents – wishing them both good luck with their *niggers*. After these civilities were over, the two women were ordered to follow their new master, who shaped his course across the country, by a road leading westwest. At parting from us, they both wept aloud, and wrung their hands in despair. We all went to them, and bade them a last farewell. Their road led into a wood, which they soon entered, and I never saw them nor heard of them again.

These women had both been driven from Calvert county, as well as myself, and the fate of the younger of the two, was peculiarly severe.

She had been brought up as a waiting-maid of a young lady, the daughter of a gentleman, whose wife and family often visited the mistress of my own wife. I had frequently seen this woman when she was a young girl, in attendance upon her young

mistress, and riding in the same carriage with her. The father of the young lady died, and soon after she married a gentleman who resided a few miles off. The husband received a considerable fortune with his bride, and amongst other things, her waiting-maid, who was reputed a great beauty among people of color. He had been addicted to the fashionable sports of the country, before marriage, such as horse-racing, fox-hunting, &c., and I had heard the black people say he drank too freely; but it was supposed that he would correct all these irregularities after marriage, more especially as his wife was a great belle, and withal very handsome. The reverse, however, turned out to be the fact. Instead of growing better, he became worse; and in the course of a few years, was known all over the country, as a drunkard and a gambler. His wife, it was said, died of grief, and soon after her death, his effects were seized by his creditors, and sold by the sheriff. The former waiting-maid, now the mother of several children, was purchased by our present master, for four hundred dollars, at the sheriff's sale, and this poor wretch, whose employment in early life had been to take care of her young mistress, and attend to her in her chamber, and at her toilet, after being torn from her husband and her children, had now gone to toil out a horrible existence beneath the scorching sun of a South Carolina cotton-field, under the dominion of a master, as void of the manners of a gentleman, as he was of the language of humanity.

It was now late in the afternoon; but, as we had made little

progress to-day, and were now divested of the burden of our chains, as well as freed from the two women, who had hitherto much retarded our march, our master ordered us to hasten on our way, as we had ten miles to go that evening. I had been so long oppressed by the weight of my chains, and the iron collar about my neck, that for some time after I commenced walking at my natural liberty, I felt a kind of giddiness, or lightness of the head. Most of my companions complained of the same sensation, and we did not recover our proper feelings until after we had slept one night. It was after dark when we arrived at our lodging-place, which proved to be the house of a small cotton-planter, who, it appeared, kept a sort of a house of entertainment for travelers, contrary to what I afterwards discovered to be the usual custom of cotton-planters. This man and my master had known each other before, and seemed to be well acquainted. He was the first person that we had met since leaving Maryland, who was known to my master, and as they kept up a very free conversation, through the course of the evening, and the house in which they were, was only separated from the kitchen, in which we were lodged, by a space of a few feet, I had an opportunity of hearing much that was highly interesting to me. The landlord, after supper, came with our master to look at us, and to see us receive our allowance of boiled rice from the hands of a couple of black women, who had prepared it in a large iron kettle. Whilst viewing us, the former asked the latter, what he intended to do with his drove; but no reply was made to this inquiry –

and as our master had, through our whole journey, maintained a studied silence on this subject, I felt a great curiosity to know what disposition he intended to make of the whole gang, and of myself in particular. On their return to the house, I advanced to a small window in the kitchen, which brought me within a few yards of the place where they sat, and from which I was able to hear all they said, although they spoke in a low tone of voice. I here learned, that so many of us as could be sold for a good price, were to be disposed of in Columbia, on our arrival at that place, and that the residue would be driven to Augusta and sold there.

The landlord assured my master that at this time slaves were much in demand, both in Columbia and Augusta; that purchasers were numerous and prices good; and that the best plan of effecting good sales would be to put up each *nigger* separately, at auction, after giving a few days' notice, by an advertisement, in the neighboring country. Cotton, he said, had not been higher for many years, and as a great many persons, especially young men, were moving off to the new purchase in Georgia, prime hands were in high demand, for the purpose of clearing the land in the new country – that the boys and girls, under twenty, would bring almost any price at present, in Columbia for the purpose of picking the growing crop of cotton, which promised to be very heavy; and as most persons had planted more than their hands would be able to pick, young *niggers*, who would soon learn to pick cotton, were prime articles in the market. As to those more advanced in life, he seemed to think the prospect of selling them

at an unusual price, not so good, as they could not so readily become expert cotton-pickers – he said further, that for some cause, which he could not comprehend, the price of rice had not been so good this year as usual; and that he had found it cheaper to purchase rice to feed his own *niggers* than to provide them with corn, which had to be brought from the upper country. He therefore advised my master not to drive us towards the rice plantation of the low country. My master said he would follow his advice, at least so far as to sell a portion of us in Carolina, but seemed to be of opinion that his prime hands would bring him more money in Georgia, and named me, in particular, as one who would be worth, at least, a thousand dollars, to a man who was about making a settlement, and clearing a plantation in the new purchase. I therefore concluded, that in the course of events, I was likely to become the property of a Georgian, which turned out in the end to be the case, though not so soon as I at this time apprehended. I slept but little this night, feeling a restlessness when no longer in chains; and pondering over the future lot of my life, which appeared fraught only with evil and misfortune. Day at length dawned, and with its first light we were ordered to betake ourselves to the road, which, we were told, would lead us to Columbia, the place of intended sale of some, if not all of us. For several days past, I had observed that in the country through which we traveled, little attention was paid to the cultivation of anything but cotton. Now this plant was almost the sole possessor of the fields. It covered the plantations adjacent

to the road, as far as I could see, both before and behind me, and looked not unlike buckwheat before it blossoms. I saw some small fields of corn, and lots of sweet potatoes, amongst which the young vines of the water-melon were frequently visible. The improvements on the plantations were not good. There were no barns, but only stables and sheds, to put the cotton under, as it was brought from the field. Hay seemed to be unknown in the country, for I saw neither hay-stacks nor meadows; and the few fields that were lying fallow, had but small numbers of cattle in them, and these were thin and meagre. We had met with no flocks of sheep of late, and the hogs that we saw on the road-side were in bad condition. The horses and mules that I saw in the cotton-fields, were poor and badly harnessed, and the half-naked condition of the negroes, who drove them, or followed with the hoe, together with their wan complexions, proved to me that they had too much work, or not enough food. We passed a cotton-gin this morning, the first that I ever saw; but they were not at work with it. We also met a party of ladies and gentlemen on a journey of pleasure, riding in two very handsome carriages, drawn by sleek and spirited horses, very different in appearance from the moving skeletons that I had noticed drawing the ploughs in the fields. The black drivers of the coaches were neatly clad in gay-colored clothes, and contrasted well with their half-naked brethren, a gang of whom were hoeing cotton by the road-side, near them, attended by an overseer in a white linen shirt and pantaloons, with one of the long negro whips in his hand.

I observed that these poor people did not raise their heads, to look at either the fine coaches and horses then passing, or at us; but kept their faces steadily bent towards the cotton-plants, from among which they were removing the weeds. I almost shuddered at the sight, knowing that I myself was doomed to a state of servitude equally cruel and debasing, unless, by some unforeseen occurrence, I might fall into the hands of a master of less inhumanity of temper than the one who had possession of the miserable creatures before me.

CHAPTER III

It was manifest that I was now in a country where the life of a black man was no more regarded than that of an ox, except as far as the man was worth the more money in the market. On all the plantations that we passed, there was a want of live stock of every description, except slaves, and they were deplorably abundant.

The fields were destitute of everything that deserved the name of grass, and not a spear of clover was anywhere visible. The few cattle that existed, were browsing on the boughs of the trees, in the woods. Everything betrayed a scarcity of the means of supplying the slaves, who cultivated the vast cotton-fields, with a sufficiency of food. We traveled this day more than thirty miles, and crossed the Catawba river in the afternoon, on the bottoms of which I saw, for the first time, fields of rice, growing in swamps covered with water. Causeways were raised through the lowlands in which the rice grew, and on which the road was formed on which we traveled. These rice-fields, or rather swamps, had, in my eyes, a beautiful appearance. The rice was nearly two feet in height above the water, and of a vivid green color, covering a large space, of at least a hundred acres. Had it not been for the water, which appeared stagnant and sickly, and swarmed with frogs and thousands of snakes, it would have been as fine a sight as one need wish to look upon. After leaving the low grounds along the river, we again entered plantations of cotton, which

lined the roads on both sides, relieved, here and there, by corn-fields and potato-patches. We stopped for the night at a small tavern, and our master said we were within a day's journey of Columbia.

We here, again, received boiled rice for supper, without salt, or any kind of seasoning; a pint was allotted to each person, which we greedily devoured, having had no dinner to-day, save an allowance of corn-cakes, with the fat of about five pounds of bacon, extracted by frying, in which we dipped our bread. I slept soundly after this day's march, the fatigues of the body having, for once, overcome the agitations of the mind. The next day, which was, if my recollection is accurate, the ninth of June, was the last of our journey before our company separated; and we were on the road before the stars had disappeared from the sky. Our breakfast, this morning, consisted of bacon soup, a dish composed of corn-meal, boiled in water, with a small piece of bacon to give the soup a taste of meat. For dinner we had boiled Indian peas, with a small allowance of bacon. This was the first time that we had received two rations of meat in the same day, on the whole journey, and some of our party were much surprised at the kindness of our master; but I had no doubt that his object was to make us look fat and hearty, to enable him to obtain better prices for us at Columbia.

At supper this night, we had corn mush, in large wooden trays, with melted lard to dip the mush in before eating it. We might have reached Columbia this day if we had continued our march,

but we stopped, at least an hour before sun-set, about three miles from town, at the house of a man who supported the double character of planter and keeper of a house of entertainment; for I learned from his slaves that their master considered it disreputable to be called a tavern-keeper, and would not put up a sign, although he received pay of such persons as lodged with him. His house was a frame building, weather-boarded with pine boards, but had no plastering within. The furniture corresponded with the house which contained it, and was both scanty and mean, consisting of pine tables and wooden chairs, with bottoms made of cornhusks. The house was only one story high, and all the rooms, six or seven in number, parlor, bedrooms, and kitchen, were on the first floor. As the weather was warm and the windows open, I had an opportunity of looking into the sleeping rooms of the family, as I walked round the house, which I was permitted freely to do. The beds and their furniture answered well to the chairs and tables; yet in the large front room I observed on an old fashioned side-board, a great quantity of glass-ware, of various descriptions, with two or three dozen silver spoons, a silver tea-urn, and several knives and forks with silver handles. In the corner of this room stood a bed with gaudy red curtains, with figures of lions, elephants, naked negroes, and other representations of African scenery.

The master of the house was not at home when we arrived, but came in from the field shortly afterwards. He met my master with the cordiality of an old friend, though he had never seen him

before; said he was happy to see him at his house, and that the greatest pleasure he enjoyed was derived from the entertainment of such gentlemen as thought proper to visit his house; that he was always glad to see strangers, and more especially gentlemen who were adding so much to the wealth and population of Carolina, as those merchants who imported servants from the North. He then observed that he had never seen a finer lot of property pass his house than we were, and that any gentleman who brought such a stock of hands into the country was a public benefactor, and entitled to the respect and gratitude of every friend of the South. He assured my master that he was happy to see him at his house, and that if he thought proper to remain a few days with him, it would be his chief business to introduce him to the gentlemen of the neighborhood, who would all be glad to become acquainted with a merchant of his respectability. In the State of Maryland, my master had been called a *negro buyer, or Georgia trader*, sometimes a *negro driver*; but here, I found that he was elevated to the rank of merchant, and a merchant of the first order too; for it was very clear that in the opinion of the landlord, no branch of trade was more honorable than the traffic in us poor slaves. Our master observed that he had a mind to remain here a short time, and try what kind of market Columbia would present, for the sale of his lot of servants; and that he would make his house his home, until he had ascertained what could be done in town, and what demand there was in the neighborhood for servants. We were not called *slaves* by these men, who talked of selling us, and of the

price we would bring, with as little compunction of conscience as they would have talked of the sale of so many mules.

It is the custom throughout all the slave-holding States, amongst people of fashion, never to speak of their negroes as slaves, but always as servants; but I had never before met with the keeper of a public house, in the country, who had arrived at this degree of refinement. I had been accustomed to hear this order of men, and indeed the greater number of white people speak of the people of color as *niggers*.

We remained at this place more than two weeks; I presume because my master found it cheaper to keep us here than in town, or perhaps, because he supposed we might recover from the hardships of our journey more speedily in the country.

As it was here that my real acquaintance with South Carolina commenced, I have noted with more particularity the incidents that occurred, than I otherwise should have done. This family was composed of the husband, wife, three daughters, all young women, and two sons, one of whom appeared to be about twenty, and the other, perhaps seventeen years old. They had nine slaves in all, one very old man, quite crooked with years and labor – two men of middle age – one lad, perhaps sixteen – one woman with three children, the oldest about seven, – and a young girl of twelve or fourteen. The farm, or plantation, they lived on, contained about one hundred and fifty acres of cleared land, sandy, and the greater part of it poor, as was proved by the stunted growth of the cotton.

At the time of our arrival at this house, I saw no persons about it, except the four ladies – the mother and her three daughters – the husband being in the field, as noticed above. According to the orders of my master, I had taken the saddle from his horse and put him in a stable; and it was not until after the first salutations of the new landlord to my master were over, that he seemed to think of asking him whether he had come on foot, on horse-back, or in a coach. He at length, however, turned suddenly and asked him, with an air of surprise, where he had left his horses and carriage. My master said he had no carriage, that he traveled on horse-back, and that his horse was in the stable. The landlord then apologized for the trouble he must have had, in having his horse put away himself; and said that at this season of the year, the planters were so hurried by their crops, and found so much difficulty in keeping down the grass, that they were generally obliged to keep all their servants in the field; that for his part, he had been compelled to put his coachman, and even the waiting-maids of his daughters into the cotton-fields, and that at this time, his family were without servants, a circumstance that had never happened before! "For my part," said he, "I have always prided myself on bringing up my family well, and can say, that although I do not live in so fine a house as some of the other planters of Carolina, yet my children are as great ladies and gentlemen as any in the state. Not one of them has ever had to do a day's work yet, and as long as I live, never shall. I sent two of my daughters to Charleston last summer, and they were there three months;

and I intend to send the youngest there this summer. They have all learned to dance here in Columbia, where I sent them two quarters to a Frenchman, and he made me pay pretty well for it. They went to the same dancing school with the daughters of Wade Hampton and Colonel Fitzhugh. I am determined that they shall never marry any but gentlemen of the first character, and I know they will always follow my advice in matters of this kind. They are prudent and sensible girls, and are not going to do as Major Pollack's daughter did this spring, who ran away with a Georgia cracker, who brought a drove of cattle for sale from the Indian country, and who had not a *nigger* in the world. He staid with me sometime, and wished to have something to say to my second daughter, but the thing would not do."

Here he stopped short in his narrative, and seeming to muse a moment, said to his guest, "I presume, as you travel alone, you have no family." "No," replied my master, "I am a single man." "I thought so by your appearance," said the loquacious landlord, "and I shall be glad to introduce you to my family this evening. My sons are two as fine fellows as there are in all Carolina. My oldest boy is lieutenant in the militia, and in the same company that marched with Gen. Marion in the war. He was on the point of fighting a duel last winter, with young M'Corkle in Columbia; but the matter was settled between them. You will see him this evening, when he returns from the quoit-party. A quoit-party of young bucks meet once every week about two miles from this, and as I wish my sons to keep the best company, they both

attend it. There is to be a cock-fight there this afternoon, and my youngest son, Edmund, has the finest cock in this country. He is one of the true game blood, – the real Dominica game breed; and I sent to Charleston for his gaffs. There is a bet of ten dollars a side between my son's cock and the one belonging to young Blainey, the son of Major Blainey. Young Blainey is a hot-headed young blood, and has been concerned in three duels, though I believe he never fought but one; but I know Edmund will not take a word from him, and it will be well if he and his cock do not both get well licked."

Here the conversation was arrested by the sound of horses' feet on the road, and in the next instant, two young men rode up at a gallop, mounted on lean looking horses; one of the riders carrying a pole on his shoulder, with a game cock in a net bag, tied to one end of it. On perceiving them the landlord exclaimed with an oath, "There's two lads of spirit! stranger – and if you will allow me the liberty of asking you your name, I will introduce you to them." At the suggestion of his name, my master seemed to hesitate a little, but after a moment's pause, said, "They call me M'Giffin, sir." "My name is Hulig, sir," replied the landlord, "and I am very happy to be acquainted with you, Mr. M'Giffin," at the same time shaking him by the hand, and introducing his two sons, who were by this time at the door.

This was the first time I had ever heard the name of my master, although I had been with him five weeks. I had never seen him before the day on which he seized and bound me

in Maryland, and as he took me away immediately, I did not hear his name at the time. The people who assisted to fetter me, either from accident or design, omitted to name him, and after we commenced our journey, he had maintained so much distant reserve and austerity of manner towards us all, that no one ventured to ask him his name. We had called him nothing but "master," and the various persons at whose houses we had stopped on our way, knew as little of his name as we did. We had frequently been asked the name of our master, and perhaps had not always obtained credence, when we said we did not know it.

Throughout the whole journey, until after we were released from our irons, he had forbidden us to converse together beyond a few words in relation to our temporary condition and wants; and as he was with us all day, and never slept out of hearing of us at night, he rigidly enforced his edict of silence. I presume that the reason of this prohibition of all conversation was to prevent us from devising plans of escape; but he had imposed as rigid a silence on himself as was enforced upon us; and after having passed from Maryland to South Carolina, in his company, I knew no more of my master, than, that he knew how to keep his secrets, guard his slaves, and make a close bargain. I had never heard him speak of his home or family; and therefore had concluded that he was an unmarried man, and an adventurer, who felt no more attachment for one place than another, and whose residence was not very well settled; but, from the large sums of money which he must have been able to command and carry with him to the

North, to enable him to purchase so large a number of slaves, I had no doubt that he was a man of consequence and consideration in the place from whence he came.

In Maryland, I had always observed that men, who were the owners of large stocks of negroes, were not averse to having publicity given to their names; and that the possession of this species of property even there, gave its owner more vanity and egotism, than fell to the lot of the holders of any other kind of estate; and in truth, my subsequent experience proved that without the possession of slaves, no man could ever arrive at, or hope to rise to any honorable station in society; – yet, my master seemed to take no pride in having at his disposal the lives of so many human beings. He never spoke to us in words of either pity or hatred; and never spoke of us, except to order us to be fed or watered, as he would have directed the same offices to be performed for so many horses, or to inquire where the best prices could be obtained for us. He regarded us only as objects of traffic and the materials of his commerce; and although he had lived several years in Carolina and Georgia, and had there exercised the profession of an overseer, he regarded the Southern planters as no less the subjects of trade and speculation than the slaves he sold to them; as will appear in the sequel. It was to this man that the landlord introduced his two sons, and upon whom he was endeavoring to impose a belief, that he was the head of a family which took rank with those of the first planters of the district. The ladies of the household, though I had seen them in

the kitchen when I walked round the house, had not yet presented themselves to my master, nor indeed were they in a condition to be seen anywhere but in the apartment they occupied at the time. The young gentlemen gave a very gasconading account of the quoit-party and cock-fight, from which they had just returned, and according to their version of the affair, it might have been an assemblage of at least half the military officers of the state; for all the persons of whom they spoke, were captains, majors and colonels. The eldest said, he had won two bowls of punch at quoits; and the youngest, whose cock had been victor in the battle, on which ten dollars were staked, vaunted much of the qualities of his bird; and supported his veracity by numerous oaths, and reiterated appeals to his brother for the truth of his assertions. Both these young men were so much intoxicated that they with difficulty maintained an erect posture in walking.

By this time the sun was going down, and I observed two female slaves, a woman and girl, approaching the house on the side of the kitchen from the cotton-field. They were coming home to prepare supper for the family; the ladies whom I had seen in the kitchen not having been there for the purpose of performing the duties appropriate to that station, but having sought it as a place of refuge from the sight of my master, who had approached the front of their dwelling silently, and so suddenly as not to permit them to gain the foot of the stairway in the large front room, without being seen by him, to whose view they by no means wished to expose themselves before they

had visited their toilets. About dark the supper was ready in the large room, and, as it had two fronts, one of which looked into the yard where my companions and I had been permitted to seat ourselves, and had an opportunity of seeing, by the light of the candle, all that was done within, and of hearing all that was said. The ladies, four in number, had entered the room before the gentlemen; and when the latter came in my master was introduced, by the landlord to his wife and daughters, by the name and title of *Colonel M'Giffin*, which, at that time, impressed me with a belief that he was really an officer, and that he had disclosed this circumstance without my knowledge; but I afterwards perceived that in the south it is deemed respectful to address a stranger by the title of Colonel, or Major, or General, if his appearance will warrant the association of so high a rank with his name. My master had declared his intention of becoming the inmate of this family for some time, and no pains seemed to be spared on their part to impress upon his mind the high opinion that they entertained of the dignity of the owner of fifty slaves; the possession of so large a number of human creatures being, in Carolina, a certificate of character, which entitles its bearer to enter whatever society he may choose to select, with out any thing more being known of his birth, his life or reputation. The man who owns fifty servants must needs be a gentleman amongst the higher ranks, and the owner of half a hundred *niggers* is a sort of nobleman amongst the low, the ignorant, and the vulgar. The mother and three daughters, whose appearance, when I saw them

in the kitchen, would have warranted the conclusion that they had just risen from bed without having time to adjust their dress, were now gaily, if not neatly attired; and the two female slaves, who had come from the field at sundown to cook the supper, now waited at the table. The landlord talked much of his crops, his plantation and slaves, and of the distinguished families who exchanged visits with his own; but my master took very little part in the conversation of the evening, and appeared disposed to maintain the air of mystery which had hitherto invested his character.

After it was quite dark, the slaves came in from the cotton-field, and taking little notice of us, went into the kitchen, and each taking thence a pint of corn, proceeded to a little mill, which was nailed to a post in the yard, and there commenced the operation of grinding meal for their suppers, which were afterwards to be prepared by baking the meal into cakes at the fire. The woman who was the mother of the three small children, was permitted to grind her allowance of corn first, and after her came the old man, and the others in succession. After the corn was converted into meal, each one kneaded it up with cold water into a thick dough, and raking away the ashes from a small space on the kitchen hearth, placed the dough, rolled up in green leaves, in the hollow, and covering it with hot embers, left it to be baked into bread, which was done in about half an hour. These loaves constituted the only supper of the slaves belonging to this family for I observed that the two women who had waited at the table,

after the supper of the white people was disposed of, also came with their corn to the mill on the post and ground their allowance like the others. They had not been permitted to taste even the fragments of the meal that they had cooked for their masters and mistresses. It was eleven o'clock before these people had finished their supper of cakes, and several of them, especially the younger of the two lads, were so overpowered with toil and sleep, that they had to be roused from their slumbers when their cakes were done, to devour them.

We had for our supper to-night, a pint of boiled rice to each person, and a small quantity of stale and very rancid butter, from the bottom of an old keg, or firkin, which contained about two pounds, the remnant of that which once filled it. We boiled the rice ourselves, in a large iron kettle; and, as our master now informed us that we were to remain here some time, many of us determined to avail ourselves of this season of respite from our toils, to wash our clothes, and free our persons from the vermin which had appeared amongst our party several weeks before, and now begun to be extremely tormenting. As we were not allowed any soap, we were obliged to resort to the use of a very fine and unctuous kind of clay, resembling fullers' earth, but of a yellow color, which was found on the margin of a small swamp near the house. This was the first time that I had ever heard of clay being used for the purpose of washing clothes; but I often availed myself of this resource afterwards, whilst I was a slave in the south. We wet our clothes, then rubbed this clay all over the

garments, and by scouring it out in warm water with our hands, the cloth, whether of woollen, or cotton, or linen texture, was entirely clean. We subjected our persons to the same process, and in this way freed our camp from the host of enemies that had been generated in the course of our journey.

This washing consumed the whole of the first day of our residence on the plantation of Mr. Hulig. We all lay the first night in a shed, or summer kitchen, standing behind the house, and a few yards from it a place in which the slaves of the plantation washed their clothes, and passed their Sundays in warm weather, when they did not work; but as this place was quite too small to accommodate our party, or indeed to contain us, without crowding us together in such a manner as to endanger our health, we were removed, the morning after our arrival, to an old decayed frame building, about one hundred yards from the house, which had been erected, as I learned, for a cotton-gin, but into which its possessor, for want of means I presume, had never introduced the machinery of the gin. This building was near forty feet square; was without any other floor than the earth, and neither doors nor windows, to close the openings which had been left for the admission of those who entered it. We were told that in this place the cotton of the plantation was deposited in the picking season, as it was brought from the field, until it could be removed to a neighboring plantation, where there was a gin to divest it of its seeds.

Here we took our temporary abode – men and women,

promiscuously. Our provisions, whilst we remained here, were regularly distributed to us; and our daily allowance to each person, consisted of a pint of corn, a pint of rice, and about three or four pounds of butter, such as we had received on the night of our arrival, divided amongst us, in small pieces from the point of a table knife. The rice we boiled in the iron kettle – we ground our corn at the little mill on the post in the kitchen, and converted the meal into bread, in the manner we had been accustomed to at home – sometimes on the hearth, and sometimes before the fire on a hoe. The butter was given us as an extraordinary ration, to strengthen and recruit us after our long march, and give us a healthy and expert appearance at the time of our future sale.

We had no beds of any kind to sleep on, but each one was provided with a blanket, which had been the companion of our travels. We were left entirely at liberty to go out or in when we pleased, and no watch was kept over us either by night or day.

Our master had removed us so far from our native country, that he supposed it impossible for any of us ever to escape from him, and surmount all the obstacles that lay between us and our former homes. He went away immediately after we were established in our new lodgings, and remained absent until the second evening about sundown, when he returned, came into our shed, sat down on a block of wood in the midst of us, and asked if any one had been sick; if we had got our clothes clean; and if we had been supplied with an allowance of rice, corn and butter. After satisfying himself upon these points, he told us that we

were now at liberty to run away if we chose to do so; but if we made the attempt we should most certainly be re-taken, and subjected to the most terrible punishment. "I never flog," said he, "my practice is to *cat-haul*; and if you run away, and I catch you again – as I surely shall do – and give you one cat-hauling, you will never run away again, nor attempt it." I did not then understand the import of cat-hauling, but in after times, became well acquainted with its signification.

We remained in this place nearly two weeks, during which time our allowance of food was not varied, and was regularly given to us. We were not required to do any work; and I had liberty and leisure to walk about the plantation, and make such observations as I could upon the new state of things around me. Gentlemen and ladies came every day to look at us, with a view of becoming our purchasers; and we were examined with minute care as to our ages, former occupations, and capacity of performing labor. Our persons were inspected, and more especially the hands were scrutinized, to see if all the fingers were perfect, and capable of the quick motions necessary in picking cotton. Our master only visited us once a day, and sometimes he remained absent two days; so that he seldom met any of those who came to see us; but, whenever it so happened that he did meet them, he laid aside his silence and became very talkative, and even animated in his conversation, extolling our good qualities, and averring that he had purchased some of us of one colonel, and others of another general in Virginia; that he

could by no means have procured us, had it not been that, in some instances, our masters had ruined themselves, and were obliged to sell us to save their families from ruin; and in others, that our owners were dead, their estates deeply in debt, and we had been sold at public sale; by which means he had become possessed of us. He said our habits were unexceptionable, our characters good; that there was not one among us all who had ever been known to run away, or steal any thing from our former masters. I observed that running away, and stealing from his master, were regarded as the highest crimes of which a slave could be guilty; but I heard no questions asked concerning our propensity to steal from other people besides our masters, and I afterwards learned, that this was not always regarded as a very high crime by the owner of a slave, provided he would perpetrate the theft so adroitly as not to be detected in it.

We were severally asked by our visitors, if we would be willing to live with them, if they would purchase us, to which we generally replied in the affirmative; but our owner declined all the offers that were made for us, upon the ground that we were too poor – looked too bad to be sold at present – and that in our condition he could not expect to get a fair value for us.

One evening, when our master was with us, a thin, sallow-looking man rode up to the house, and alighting from his horse, came to us, and told him that he had come to buy a boy; that he wished to get a good field hand, and would pay a good price for him. I never saw a human countenance that expressed

more of the evil passions of the heart than did that of this man, and his conversation corresponded with his physiognomy. Every sentence of his language was accompanied with an oath of the most vulgar profanity, and his eyes appeared to me to be the index of a soul as cruel as his visage was disgusting and repulsive.

After looking at us for some time, this wretch singled *me* out as the object of his choice, and coming up to me, asked me how I would like him for a master. In my heart I detested him; but a slave is often afraid to speak the truth, and divulge all he feels; so with myself in this instance, as it was doubtful whether I might not fall into his hands, and be subject to the violence of his temper, I told him that if he was a good master, as every gentleman ought to be, I should be willing to live with him. He appeared satisfied with my answer, and turning to my master, said he would give a high price for me. "I can," said he, "by going to Charleston, buy as many Guinea negroes as I please for two hundred dollars each, but as I like this fellow, I will give you four hundred for him." This offer struck terror into my heart, for I knew it was as much as was generally given for the best and ablest slaves, and I expected that it would immediately be accepted as my price, and that I should be at once consigned to the hands of this man, of whom I had formed so abhorrent an opinion. To my surprise and satisfaction, however, my master made no reply to the proposition; but stood for a moment, with one hand raised to his face and his fore-finger on his nose, and then turning suddenly to me, said, "Go into the house; I shall not sell you to-day." It was

my business to obey the order of departure, and as I went beyond the sound of their voices, I could not understand the purport of the conversation which followed between these two traffickers in human blood; but after a parley of about a quarter of an hour, the hated stranger started abruptly away, and going to the road, mounted his horse, and rode off at a gallop, banishing himself and my fears together.

I did not see my master again this evening, and when I came out of our barracks in the morning, although it was scarcely daylight, I saw him standing near one corner of the building, with his head inclined towards the wall, evidently listening to catch any sounds within. He ordered me to go and feed his horse, and have him saddled for him by sunrise. About an hour afterwards he came to the stable in his riding dress; and told me that he should remove us all to Columbia in a few days. He then rode away, and did not return until the third day afterwards.

CHAPTER IV

It was now about the middle of June, the weather excessively warm, and from eleven o'clock, A. M., until late in the afternoon, the sand about our residence was so hot that we could not stand on it with our bare feet in one posture, more than one or two minutes. The whole country, so far as I could see, appeared to be a dead plain, without the least variety of either hill or dale. The pine was so far the predominating timber of the forest, that at a little distance the entire woods appeared to be composed of this tree.

I had become weary of being confined to the immediate vicinity of our lodgings, and determined to venture out into the fields of the plantation, and see the manner of cultivating cotton. Accordingly, after I had made my morning meal upon corn cakes, I sallied out in the direction which I had seen the slaves of the plantation take at the time they left the house at daylight, and following a path through a small field of corn, which was so tall as to prevent me from seeing beyond it, I soon arrived at the field in which the people were at work with hoes amongst the cotton, which was about two feet and a half high, and had formed such long branches, that they could no longer plough in it without breaking it. Expecting to pass the remainder of my life in this kind of labor, I felt anxious to know the evils, if any, attending it, and more especially the manner in which the slaves

were treated on the cotton estates.

The people now before me, were all diligently and laboriously weeding and hilling the cotton with hoes, and when I approached them, they scarcely took time to speak to me, but continued their labor as if I had not been present. As there did not appear to be any overseer with them, I thought I would go amongst them, and enter into conversation with them; but upon addressing myself to one of the men, and telling him, if it was not disagreeable to him, I should be glad to become acquainted with him, he said he should be glad to be acquainted with me, but master Tom did not allow him to talk much to people when he was at work. I asked him where his master Tom was; but before he had time to reply, same one called – "Mind your work there, you rascals." Looking in the direction of the sound, I saw master Tom, sitting under the shade of a sassafras tree, at the distance of about a hundred yards from us. Deeming it unsafe to continue in the field without the permission of its lord, I approached the sassafras tree, with my hat in my hand, and in a very humble manner, asked leave to help the people work awhile, as I was tired of staying about the house and doing nothing. He said he did not care; I might go and work with them awhile, but I must take care not to talk too much and keep his hands from their work.

Now, having authority on my side, I returned, and taking a hoe from the hands of a small girl, told her to pull up weeds, and I would take her row for her. When we arrived at the end of the rows which we were then hilling, master Tom, who still

held his post under the sassafras tree, called his people to come to breakfast. Although I had already broken my fast, I went with the rest for the purpose of seeing what their breakfast was composed of. At the tree I saw a keg which contained about five gallons, with water in it, and a gourd lying by it; near this was a basket made of splits, large enough to hold more than a peck. It contained the breakfast of the people, covered by some green leaves of the magnolia, or great bay tree of the South. When the leaves were removed, I found that the supply of provisions consisted of one cake of corn-meal, weighing about half a pound, for each person. This bread had no sort of seasoning, not even salt, and constituted the only breakfast of these poor people, who had been toiling from early dawn until about eight o'clock. There was no cake for me, and master Tom did not say anything to me on the state of my stomach; but the young girl, whose hoe I had taken in the field, offered me a part of her cake, which I refused. After the breakfast was despatched, we again returned to our work; but the master ordered the girl, whose hoe I had, to go and get another hoe which lay at some distance in the field, and take her row again. I continued in the field until dinner, which took place about one o'clock, and was the same, in all respects, as the breakfast had been.

Master Tom was the younger of the two brothers who returned from the cock-fight on the evening of our arrival at this place, — he left the field about ten o'clock, and was succeeded by his elder brother, as overseer for the remainder of the day. After

this change of superintendents, my companions became more loquacious, and in the course of an hour or two, I had become familiar with the condition of my fellow-laborers, who told me that the elder of their young masters was much less tyrannical than his younger brother; and that whilst the former remained in the field they would be at liberty to talk as much as they pleased, provided they did not neglect their work. One of the men who appeared to be about forty years of age, and who was the foreman of the field, told me that he had been born in South Carolina, and had always lived there, though he had only belonged to his present master about ten years. I asked him if his master allowed him no meat, nor any kind of provisions except bread; to which he replied that they never had any meat except at Christmas, when each hand on the place received about three pounds of pork; that from September, when the sweet potatoes were at the maturity of their growth, they had an allowance of potatoes as long as the crop held out, which was generally until about March; but that for the rest of the year, they had nothing but a peck of corn a week, with such weeds and other vegetables as they could gather from the fields for greens – that their master did not allow them any salt, and that the only means they had of procuring this luxury, was, by working on Sundays for the neighboring planters, who paid them in money at the rate of fifty cents per day, with which they purchased salt and some other articles of convenience.

This man told me that his master furnished him with two shirts of tow linen, and two pair of trowsers, one of woollen and the

other of linen cloth, one woollen jacket, and one blanket every year. That he received the woollen clothes at Christmas, and the linen at Easter; and all the other clothes, if he had any, he was obliged to provide for himself by working on Sunday. He said, that for several years past, he had not been able to provide any clothes for himself; as he had a wife with several small children, on an adjoining plantation, whose master gave only one suit of clothes in the year to the mother, and none of any kind to the children, which had compelled him to lay out all his savings in providing clothes for his family, and such little necessaries as were called for by his wife from time to time. He had not had a shoe on his foot for several years, but in winter made a kind of moccasin for himself of the bark of a tree, which he said was abundant in the swamps, and could be so manufactured as to make good ropes, and tolerable moccasins, sufficient at least to defend the feet from the frost, though not to keep them dry.

The old man whom I have alluded to before, was in the field with the others, though he was not able to keep up with his row. He had no clothes on him except the remains of an old shirt, which hung in tatters from his neck and arms; the two young girls had nothing on them but petticoats, made of coarse tow-cloth, and the woman, who was the mother of the children, wore the remains of a tow-linen shift, the front part of which was entirely gone; but a piece of old cotton bagging tied round her loins, served the purposes of an apron. The younger of the two boys was entirely naked.

The man who was foreman of the field, was a person of good sense for the condition of life in which fortune had placed him, and spoke to me freely of his hard lot. I observed that under his shirt, which was very ragged, he wore a piece of fine linen cloth, apparently part of an old shirt, wrapped closely round his back, and confined in front by strings, tied down his breast. I asked him why he wore that piece of gentleman's linen under his shirt, and shall give his reply in his own words as well as I can recollect them, at a distance of near thirty years.

"I have always been a hard working man, and have suffered a great deal from hunger in my time. It is not possible for a man to work hard every day for several months, and get nothing but a peck of corn a week to eat, and not feel hungry. When a man is hungry, you know, (if you have ever been hungry,) he must eat whatever he can get. I have not tasted meat since last Christmas, and we have had to work uncommonly hard this summer. Master has a flock of sheep, that run in the woods, and they come every night to sleep in the lane near the house. Two weeks ago last Saturday, when we quit work at night, I was very hungry, and as we went to the house we passed along the lane where the sheep lay. There were nearly fifty of them, and some were very fat. The temptation was more than I could bear. I caught one of them, cut its head off with the hoe that I carried on my shoulder, and threw it under the fence. About midnight, when all was still about the house, I went out with a knife, took the sheep into the woods, and dressed it by the light of the moon. The carcass I

took home, and after cutting it up, placed it in the great kettle over a good fire, intending to boil it and divide it, when cooked, between my fellow-slaves (whom I knew to be as hungry as I was) and myself. Unfortunately for me, master Tom, who had been out amongst his friends that day, had not returned at bed-time; and about one o'clock in the morning, at the time when I had a blazing fire under the kettle, I heard the sound of the feet of a horse coming along the lane. The kitchen walls were open so that the light of my fire could not be concealed, and in a moment I heard the horse blowing at the front of the house. Conscious of my danger, I stripped my shirt from my back, and pushed it into the boiling kettle, so as wholly to conceal the flesh of the sheep. I had scarcely completed this act of precaution, when master Tom burst into the kitchen, and with a terrible oath, asked me what I was doing so late at night, with a great fire in the kitchen. I replied, 'I am going to wash my shirt, master, and am boiling it to get it clean.' 'Washing your shirt at this time of night!' said he, 'I will let you know that you are not to sit up all night and be lazy and good for nothing all day. There shall be no boiling of shirts here on Sunday morning,' and thrusting his cane into the kettle, he raised my shirt out and threw it on the kitchen floor.

"He did not at first observe the mutton, which rose to the surface of the water as soon as the shirt was removed; but, after giving the shirt a kick towards the door, he again turned his face to the fire, and seeing a leg standing several inches out of the pot, he demanded of me what I had in there and where I had

got this meat! Finding that I was detected, and that the whole matter must be discovered, I said, – 'Master, I am hungry, and am cooking my supper.' 'What is it you have in here?' 'A sheep,' said I, and as the words were uttered, he knocked me down with his cane, and after beating me severely, ordered me to cross my hands until he bound me fast with a rope that hung in the kitchen, and answered the double purpose of a clothes line and a cord to tie us with when we were to be whipped. He put out the fire under the kettle, drew me into the yard, tied me fast to the mill-post, and leaving me there for the night, went and called one of the negro boys to put his horse in the stable, and went to his bed. The cord was bound so tightly round my wrists, that before morning the blood had burst out under my finger nails; but I suppose my master slept soundly for all that. I was afraid to call any one to come and release me from my torment, lest a still more terrible punishment might overtake me.

"I was permitted to remain in this situation until long after sunrise the next morning, which being Sunday, was quiet and still; my fellow-slaves being permitted to take their rest after the severe toil of the past week, and my old master and two young ones having no occasion to rise to call the hands to the field, did not think of interrupting their morning slumbers, to release me from my painful confinement. However, when the sun was risen about an hour, I heard the noise of persons moving in the great house, and soon after a loud and boisterous conversation, which I well knew portended no good to me. At length they all three came

into the yard where I lay lashed to the post, and approaching me, my old master asked me if I had any accomplices in stealing the sheep. I told them none – that it was entirely my own act – and that none of my fellow-slaves had any hand in it. This was the truth; but if any of my companions had been concerned with me, I should not have betrayed them; for such an act of treachery could not have alleviated the dreadful punishment which I knew awaited me, and would only have involved them in the same misery.

"They called me a thief, loaded me with oaths and imprecations, and each one proposed the punishment which he deemed the most appropriate to the enormity of the crime that I had committed. Master Tom was of opinion, that I should be lashed to the post at the foot of which I lay, and that each of my fellow-slaves should be compelled to give me a dozen lashes in turn, with a roasted and greased hickory *gad*, until I had received, in the whole, two hundred and fifty lashes on my bare back, and that he would stand by, with the whip in his hand, and *compel* them not to spare me; but after a short debate this was given up, as it would probably render me unable to work in the field again for several weeks. My master Ned was in favor of giving me a dozen lashes every morning for a month, with the whip; but my old master said, this would be attended with too much trouble, and besides, it would keep me from my work, at least half an hour every morning, and proposed, in his turn, that I should not be whipped at all, but that the carcass of the sheep should be

taken from the kettle in its half-boiled condition, and hung up in the kitchen loft without salt; and that I should be compelled to subsist on this putrid mutton without any other food, until it should be consumed. This suggestion met the approbation of my young masters, and would have been adopted, had not mistress at this moment come into the yard, and hearing the intended punishment, loudly objected to it, because the mutton would, in a day or two, create such an offensive stench, that she and my young mistresses would not be able to remain in the house. My mistress swore dreadfully, and cursed me for an ungrateful sheep thief, who, after all her kindness in giving me soup and warm bread when I was sick last winter, was always stealing every thing I could get hold of. She then said to my master, that such villany ought not to be passed over in a slight manner, and that as crimes, such as this, concerned the whole country, my punishment ought to be public for the purpose of example; and advised him to have me whipped that same afternoon, at five o'clock; first giving notice to the neighborhood to come and see the spectacle, and to bring with them their slaves, that they might be witnesses to the consequences of stealing sheep.

"They then returned to the house to breakfast; but as the pain in my hands and arms produced by the ligatures of the cord with which I was bound, was greater than I could bear, I now felt exceedingly sick, and lost all knowledge of my situation. They told me I fainted; and when I recovered my faculties, I found myself lying in the shade of the house, with my hands free, and

all the white persons in my master's family standing around me. As soon as I was able to stand, the rope was tied round my neck, and the other end again fastened to the mill post. My mistress said I had only pretended to faint; and master Tom said, I would have something worth fainting for before night. He was faithful to his promise; but, for the present, I was suffered to sit on the grass in the shade of the house.

"As soon as breakfast was over, my two young masters had their horses saddled, and set out to give notice to their friends of what had happened, and to invite them to come and see me punished for the crime I had committed. My mistress gave me no breakfast, and when I begged one of the black boys whom I saw looking at me through the pales, to bring me some water in a gourd to drink, she ordered him to bring it from a puddle in the lane. My mistress has always been very cruel to all her black people.

"I remained in this situation until about eleven o'clock, when one of my young mistresses came to me and gave me a piece of jonny-cake about the size of my hand, perhaps larger than my hand, telling me at the same time, that my fellow-slaves had been permitted to re-boil the mutton that I had left in the kettle, and make their breakfast of it, but that her mother would not allow her to give me any part of it. It was well for them that I had parboiled it with my shirt, and so defiled it that it was unfit for the table of my master, otherwise, no portion of it would have fallen to the black people – as it was, they had as much meat as

they could consume in two days, for which I had to suffer.

"About twelve o'clock, one of my young masters returned, and soon afterwards the other came home. I heard them tell my old master that they had been round to give notice of my offence to the neighboring planters, and that several of them would attend to see me flogged, and would bring with them some of their slaves, who might be able to report to their companions what had been done to me for stealing.

"It was late in the afternoon before any of the gentlemen came; but, before five o'clock, there were more than twenty white people, and at least fifty black ones present, the latter of whom had been compelled, by their masters, to come and see me punished. Amongst others, an overseer from a neighboring estate attended; and to him was awarded the office of executioner. I was stripped of my shirt, and the waist-band of my trousers was drawn closely round me, below my hips, so as to expose the whole of my back, in its entire length.

"It seems that it had been determined to beat me with thongs of raw cow-hide, for the overseer had two of these in his hands, each about four feet long; but one of the gentlemen present said this might bruise my back so badly, that I could not work for sometime; perhaps not for a week or two; and as I could not be spared from the field without disadvantage to my master's crop, he suggested a different plan, by which, in his opinion, the greatest degree of pain could be inflicted on me, with the least danger of rendering me unable to work. As he was a large planter,

and had more than fifty slaves, all were disposed to be guided by his counsels, and my master said he would submit the matter entirely to him as a man of judgment and experience in such cases. He then desired my master to have a dozen pods of red pepper boiled in half a gallon of water, and desired the overseer to lay aside his thongs of raw-hide, and put a new cracker of silk, to the lash of his negro whip. Whilst these preparations were being made, each of my thumbs were lashed closely to the end of a stick about three feet long, and a chair being placed beside the mill post, I was compelled to raise my hands and place the stick, to which my thumbs were bound, over the top of the post, which is about eighteen inches square; the chair was then taken from under me, and I was left hanging by the thumbs, with my face towards the post, and my feet about a foot from the ground. My two great toes were then tied together, and drawn down the post as far as my joints could be stretched; the cord was passed round the post two or three times and securely fastened. In this posture I had no power of motion, except in my neck, and could only move that at the expense of beating my face against the side of the post.

"The pepper tea was now brought, and poured into a basin to cool, and the overseer was desired to give me a dozen lashes just above the waist-band; and not to cover a space of more than four inches on my back, from the waist-band upwards. He obeyed the injunction faithfully, but slowly, and each crack of the whip was followed by a sensation as painful as if a red hot iron had

been drawn across my back. When the twelve strokes had been given, the operation was suspended, and a black man, one of the slaves present, was compelled to wash the gashes in my skin, with the scalding pepper tea, which was yet so hot that he could not hold his hand in it. This doubly-burning liquid was thrown into my raw and bleeding wounds, and produced a tormenting smart, beyond the description of language. After a delay of ten minutes, by the watch, I received another dozen lashes, on the part of my back which was immediately above the bleeding and burning gashes of the former whipping; and again the biting, stinging, pepper tea was applied to my lacerated and trembling muscles. This operation was continued at regular intervals, until I had received ninety-six lashes, and my back was cut and scalded from end to end. Every stroke of the whip had drawn blood; many of the gashes were three inches long; my back burned as if it had been covered by a coat of hot embers, mixed with living coals; and I felt my flesh quiver like that of animals that have been slaughtered by the butcher and are flayed whilst yet half alive. My face was bruised, and my nose bled profusely, for in the madness of my agony, I had not been able to refrain from beating my head violently against the post.

"Vainly did I beg and implore for mercy. I was kept bound to the post with my whole weight hanging upon my thumbs, an hour and a half, but it appeared to me that I had entered upon eternity, and that my sufferings would never end. At length, however, my feet were unbound, and afterwards my hands; but when released

from the cords, I was so far exhausted as not to be able to stand, and my thumbs were stiff and motionless. I was carried into the kitchen, and laid on a blanket, where my mistress came to see me; and after looking at my lacerated back, and telling me that my wounds were only skin deep, said I had come off well, after what I had done, and that I ought to be thankful that it was not worse with me. She then bade me not to groan so loud, nor make so much noise, and left me to myself. I lay in this condition until it was quite dark, by which time the burning of my back had much abated, and was succeeded by an aching soreness, which rendered me unable to turn over or bend my spine in the slightest manner. My mistress again visited me, and brought with her about half a pound of fat bacon, which she made one of the black women roast before the fire on a fork, until the oil ran freely from it, and then rub it warm over my back. This was repeated until I was greased from the neck to the hips, effectually. An old blanket was then thrown over me, and I was left to pass the night alone. Such was the terror stricken into my fellow-slaves, by the example made of me, that although they loved and pitied me, not one of them dared to approach me during this night.

"My strength was gone, and I at length fell asleep, from which I did not awake until the horn was blown the next morning, to call the people to the corn crib, to receive their weekly allowance of a peck of corn. I did not rise, nor attempt to join the other people, and shortly afterwards my master entered the kitchen, and in a soft and gentle tone of voice, asked me if I was dead. I answered

him that I was not dead, and making some effort, found I was able to get upon my feet. My master had become frightened when he missed me at the corn crib, and being suddenly seized with an apprehension that I was dead, his heart had become softened, not with compassion for my sufferings, but with the fear of losing his best field hand; but when he saw me stand before him erect, and upright, the recollection of the lost sheep revived in his mind, and with it, all his feelings of revenge against the author of its death.

"So you are not dead yet, you thieving rascal," said he, and cursing me with many bitter oaths, ordered me to go along to the crib and get my corn, and go to work with the rest of the hands. I was forced to obey, and taking my basket of corn from the door of the crib, placed it in the kitchen loft, and went to the field with the other people.

"Weak and exhausted as I was, I was compelled to do the work of an able hand, but was not permitted to taste the mutton, which was all given to the others, who were carefully guarded whilst they were eating, lest they should give me some of it."

This man's back was not yet well. Many of the gashes made by the lash were yet sore, and those that were healed had left long white stripes across his body. He had no notion of leaving the service of his tyrannical master, and his spirit was so broken and subdued that he was ready to suffer and to bear all his hardships: not, indeed, without complaining, but without attempting to resist his oppressors or to escape from their power. I saw him often whilst I remained at this place, and ventured to tell him

once, that if I had a master who would abuse me as he had abused him, I would run away. "Where could I run, or in what place could I conceal myself?" said he. "I have known many slaves who ran away, but they were always caught and treated worse afterwards than they had been before. I have heard that there is a place called Philadelphia, where the black people are all free, but I do not know which way it lies, nor what road I should take to go there; and if I knew the way, how could I hope to get there? would not the patrol be sure to catch me?"

I pitied this unfortunate creature, and was at the same time fearful that, in a short time, I should be equally the object of pity myself. How well my fears were justified the sequel of my narrative will show.

CHAPTER V

We had been stationed in the old cotton-gin house about twenty days, had recovered from the fatigues of our journey, and were greatly improved in our strength and appearance, when our master returned one evening, after an absence of two days, and told us that we must go to Columbia the next day, and must, for this purpose, have our breakfast ready by sunrise. On the following morning he called us at daylight, and we made all despatch in preparing our morning repast, the last that we were to take in our present residence.

As our equipments consisted of a few clothes we had on our persons and a solitary blanket to each individual, our baggage was easily adjusted, and we were on the road before the sun was up half an hour; and in less than an hour we were in Columbia, drawn up in a long line in the street opposite the court-house.

The town, which was small and mean-looking, was full of people, and I believe that more than a thousand gentlemen came to look at us within the course of this day. We were kept in the street about an hour, and were then taken into the jail-yard and permitted to sit down; but were not shut up in the jail. The court was sitting in Columbia at this time, and either this circumstance or the intelligence of our arrival in the country, or both, had drawn together a very great crowd of people.

We were supplied with victuals by the jailor, and had a small

allowance of salt pork for dinner. We slept in the jail at night, and as none of us had been sold on the day of our arrival in Columbia, and we had not heard any of the persons who came to look at us make proposals to our master for our purchase, I supposed it might be his intention to drive us still farther south before he offered us for sale; but I discovered my error on the second day, which was Tuesday. This day the crowd in town was much greater than it had been on Monday; and, about ten o'clock our master came into the yard in company with the jailor, and after looking at us some time, the latter addressed us in a short speech, which continued perhaps five minutes. In this harangue he told us we had come to live in the finest country in the world; that South Carolina was the richest and best part of the United States; and that he was going to sell us to gentlemen who would make us all very happy, and would require us to do no hard work; but only raise cotton and pick it. He then ordered a handsome young lad, about eighteen years of age, to follow him into the street, where he observed a great concourse of persons collected. Here the jailor made another harangue to the multitude, in which he assured them that he was just about to sell the most valuable lot of slaves that had ever been offered in Columbia. That we were all young, in excellent health, of good habits, having been all purchased in Virginia, from the estates of tobacco planters; and that there was not one in the whole lot who had lost the use of a single finger, or was blind of an eye.

He then cried the poor lad for sale, and the first bid he received

was two hundred dollars. Others quickly succeeded, and the boy, who was a remarkably handsome youth, was stricken off in a few minutes to a young man who appeared not much older than himself, at three hundred and fifty dollars. The purchaser paid down his price to our master on a table in the jail, and the lad, after bidding us farewell, followed his new master with tears running down his cheeks.

He next sold a young girl, about fifteen or sixteen years old, for two hundred and fifty dollars, to a lady who attended the sales in her carriage, and made her bids out of the window. In this manner the sales were continued for about two hours and a half, when they were adjourned until three o'clock. In the afternoon they were again resumed, and kept open until about five o'clock, when they were closed for the day. As my companions were sold, they were taken from amongst us, and we saw them no more.

The next morning, before day, I was awakened from my sleep by the sound of several heavy fires of cannon, which were discharged, as it seemed to me, within a few yards of the place where I lay. These were succeeded by fifes and drums, and all the noise with which I had formerly heard the fourth of July ushered in, at the Navy Yard in Washington.

Since I had left Maryland I had carefully kept the reckoning of the days of the week, but had not been careful to note the dates of the month; yet as soon as daylight appeared, and the door of our apartment was opened, I inquired and learned that this was, as I had supposed it to be, the day of universal rejoicing.

I understood that the court did not sit this day, but a great crowd of people gathered and remained around the jail all the morning; many of whom were intoxicated, and sang and shouted in honor of free government, and the rights of man. About eleven o'clock, a long table was spread under a row of trees which grew in the street, not far from the jail, and which appeared to me to be of the kind called in Pennsylvania, the pride of China. At this table several hundred persons sat down to dinner soon after noon, and continued to eat and drink, and sing songs in honor of liberty, for more than two hours. At the end of the dinner a gentleman rose and stood upon his chair, near one end of the table, and begged the company to hear him for a few minutes. He informed them that he was a candidate for some office – but what office it was I do not recollect – and said, that as it was an acknowledged principle of our free government, that all men were born free and equal, he presumed it would not be deemed an act of arrogance in him, to call upon them for their votes at the coming election.

This first speaker was succeeded by another, who addressed his audience in nearly the same language; and after he had concluded, the company broke up. I heard a black man that belonged to the jailer, or, who was at least in his service, say that there had been a great meeting that morning in the court house, at which several gentlemen had made speeches.

When I lived at the navy-yard, the officers sometimes permitted me to go up town with them, on the fourth of July,

and listen to the fine speeches that were made there, on such occasions.

About five o'clock, the jailer came and stood at the front door of the jail, and proclaimed, in a very loud voice, that a sale of most valuable slaves would immediately take place; that he had sold many fine hands yesterday, but they were only the refuse and most worthless part of the whole lot; – that those who wished to get great bargains and prime property, had better attend now; as it was certain that such negroes had never been offered for sale in Columbia before.

In a few minutes the whole assembly, that had composed the dinner party, and hundreds of others, were convened around the jail door, and the jailer again proceeded with his auction. Several of the stoutest men and handsomest women in the whole company, had been reserved for this day; and I perceived that the very best of us were kept back for the last. We went off at rather better prices than had been obtained on the former day; and I perceived much eagerness amongst the bidders, many of whom were not sober. Within less than three hours, only three of us remained in the jail; and we were ordered to come and stand at the door, in front of the crier, who made a most extravagant eulogium upon our good qualities and capacity to perform labor. He said, "These three fellows are as strong as horses, and as patient as mules; one of them can do as much work as two common men, and they are perfectly honest. Mr. M'Giffin says, he was assured by their former masters that they were

never known to steal, or run away. They must bring good prices, gentlemen, or they will not be sold. Their master is determined, that if they do not bring six hundred dollars, he will not sell them, but will take them to Georgia next summer, and sell them to some of the new settlers. These boys can do anything. This one," referring to me, "can cut five cords of wood in a day, and put it up. He is a rough carpenter, and a first rate field hand. This one," laying his hand on the shoulder of one of my companions, "is a blacksmith; and can lay a ploughshare; put new steel upon an axe; or mend a broken chain." The other, he recommended as a good shoemaker, and well acquainted with the process of tanning leather.

We were all nearly of the same age; and very stout, healthy, robust young men, in full possession of our corporal powers; and if we had been shut up in a room, with ten of the strongest of those who had assembled to purchase us, and our liberty had depended on tying them fast to each other, I have no doubt that we should have been free, if ropes had been provided for us.

After a few minutes of hesitancy amongst the purchasers, and a closer examination of our persons than had been made in the jail-yard, an elderly gentleman said he would take the carpenter; and the blacksmith, and shoemaker, were immediately taken by others, at the required price.

It was now sundown. The heat of the day had been very oppressive, and I was glad to be released from the confined air of the jail, and the hot atmosphere, in which so many hundreds were

breathing. – My new master asked me my name, and ordered me to follow him.

We proceeded to a tavern, where a great number of persons were assembled, at a short distance from the jail. My master entered the house, and joined in the conversation of the party, in which the utmost hilarity prevailed. They were drinking toasts in honor of liberty and independence, over glasses of toddy – a liquor composed of a mixture of rum, water, sugar, and nutmeg.

It was ten o'clock at night before my master and his companions had finished their toasts and toddy; and all this time, I had been standing before the door, or sitting on a log of wood, that lay in front of the house. At one time, I took a seat on a bench, at the side of the house; but was soon driven from this position by a gentleman, in military clothes, with a large gilt epaulet on each shoulder, and a profusion of glittering buttons on his coat; who passing near me in the dark, and happening to cast his eye on me, demanded of me, in an imperious tone, how I dared to sit on that seat. I told him I was a stranger, and did not know that it was wrong to sit there. He then ordered me with an oath, to begone from there; and said, if he caught me on that bench again, he would cut my head off. "Did you not see white people sit upon that bench, you saucy rascal?" said he. I assured him I had not seen any white gentleman sit on the bench, as it was near night when I came to the house; that I had not intended to be saucy, or misbehave myself; and that I hoped he would not be angry with me, as my master had left me at the door, and had

not told me where I was to sit.

I remained on the log until the termination of the festival, in honor of liberty and equality; when my master came to the door, and observed in my hearing, to some of his friends, that they had celebrated the day in a handsome manner.

No person, except the military gentleman, had spoken to me since I came to the house in the evening with my master, who seemed to have forgotten me; for he remained at the door, warmly engaged in conversation, on various political subjects, a full hour after he rose from the toast party. At length, however, I heard him say – "I bought a negro this evening – I wonder where he is." Rising immediately from the log on which I had been so long seated, I presented myself before him, and said, "Here, master." He then ordered me to go to the kitchen of the inn, and go to sleep; but said nothing to me about supper. – I retired to the kitchen, where I found a large number of servants, who belonged to the house, and among them two young girls, who had been purchased by a gentleman who lived near Augusta; and who, they told me, intended to set out for his plantation the next morning, and take them with him.

These girls had been sold out of our company on the first day; and had been living in the tavern kitchen since that time. They appeared quite contented, and evinced no repugnance to setting out the next morning for their master's plantation. They were of that order of people who never look beyond the present day; and so long as they had plenty of victuals, in this kitchen, they did

not trouble themselves with reflections upon the cotton field.

One of the servants gave me some cold meat and a piece of wheaten bread, which was the first I had tasted since I left Maryland, and indeed, it was the last that I tasted until I reached Maryland again.

I here met with a man who was born and brought up in the Northern Neck of Virginia, on the banks of the Potomac, and within a few miles of my native place. We soon formed an acquaintance, and sat up nearly all night. He was the chief hostler in the stable of this tavern, and told me that he had often thought of attempting to escape, and return to Virginia. He said he had little doubt of being able to reach the Potomac; but having no knowledge of the country beyond that river, he was afraid that he should not be able to make his way to Philadelphia; which he regarded as the only place in which he could be safe from the pursuit of his master. I was myself then young, and my knowledge of the country, north of Baltimore, was very vague and undefined. I, however, told him, that I had heard, that if a black man could reach any part of Pennsylvania, he would be beyond the reach of his pursuers. He said he could not justly complain of want of food; but the services required of him were so unreasonable, and the punishment frequently inflicted upon him, so severe, that he was determined to set out for the North, as soon as the corn was so far ripe as to be fit to be roasted. He felt confident, that by lying in the woods and unfrequented places all day, and traveling only by night, he could escape the vigilance of

all pursuit; and gain the Northern Neck, before the corn would be gathered from the fields. He had no fear of wanting food, as he could live well on roasting ears, as long as the corn was in the milk; and afterwards, on parched corn, as long as the grain remained in the field. I advised him as well as I could, as to the best means of reaching the State of Pennsylvania, but was not able to give him any very definite instructions.

This man possessed a very sound understanding; and having been five years in Carolina, was well acquainted with the country. He gave me such an account of the sufferings of the slaves, on the cotton and indigo plantations – of whom I now regarded myself as one – that I was unable to sleep any this night. From the resolute manner in which he spoke of his intended elopement, and the regularity with which he had connected the various combinations of the enterprise, I have no doubt that he undertook that which he intended to perform. Whether he was successful or not in the enterprise, I cannot say, as I never saw him nor heard of him after the next morning.

This man certainly communicated to me the outlines of the plan, which I afterwards put in execution, and by which I gained my liberty, at the expense of sufferings, which none can appreciate, except those who have borne all that the stoutest human constitution can bear, of cold and hunger, toil and pain. The conversation of this slave aroused in my breast so many recollections of the past, and fears of the future, that I did not lie down, but sat on an old chair until daylight.

From the people of the kitchen I again received some cold victuals for my breakfast, but I did not see my master until about nine o'clock; the toddy of the last evening causing him to sleep late this morning. At length a female slave gave me notice that my master wished to see me in the dining-room, whither I repaired without a moment's delay. When I entered the room he was sitting near the window, smoking a pipe, with a very long handle – I believe more than two feet in length.

He asked no questions, but addressing me by the title of "boy," ordered me to go with the hostler of the inn, and get his horse and chaise ready. As soon as this order could be executed, I informed him that his chaise was at the door, and we immediately commenced our journey to the plantation of my master, which, he told me, lay at the distance of twenty miles from Columbia. He said I must keep up with him, and, as he drove at the rate of five or six miles an hour, I was obliged to run nearly half the time; but I was then young, and could easily travel fifty or sixty miles in a day. It was with great anxiety that I looked for the place, which was in future to be my home; but this did not prevent me from making such observations upon the state of the country through which we traveled, as the rapidity of our march permitted.

This whole region had originally been one vast wilderness of pine forest, except the low grounds and river bottoms, here called swamps, in which all the varieties of trees, shrubs, vines, and plants peculiar to such places, in southern latitudes, vegetated in unrestrained luxuriance. Nor is pine the only timber that

grows on the uplands, in this part of Carolina, although it is the predominant tree, and in some places prevails to the exclusion of every other – oak, hickory, sassafras, and many others are found.

Here, also, I first observed groves of the most beautiful of all the trees of the wood – the great Southern Magnolia, or Green Bay. No adequate conception can be formed of the appearance or the fragrance of this most magnificent tree, by any one who has not seen it or scented the air when scented by the perfume of its flowers. It rises in a right line to the height of seventy or eighty feet; the stem is of a delicate taper form and casts off numerous branches, in nearly right angles with itself; the extremities of which decline gently towards the ground, and become shorter and shorter in the ascent, until at the apex of the tree they are scarcely a foot in length, whilst below they are many times found twenty feet long. The immense cones formed by these trees are as perfect as those diminutive forms which nature exhibits in the bur of the pine tree. The leaf of the Magnolia is smooth, of an oblong taper form, about six inches in length, and half as broad. Its color is the deepest and purest green. The foliage of the Bay tree is as impervious as a brick wall to the rays of the sun, and its refreshing coolness, in the heat of a summer day, affords one of the greatest luxuries of a cotton plantation. It blooms in May, and bears great numbers of broad, expanded white flowers, the odor of which is exceedingly grateful, and so abundant, that I have no doubt that a grove of these trees in full bloom, may be smelled at a distance of fifteen or twenty miles. I have heard it asserted

in the South, that their scent has been perceived by persons fifty or sixty miles from them.

This tree is one of nature's most splendid, and in the climate where she has placed it, one of her most agreeable productions. It is peculiar to the southern temperate latitudes, and cannot bear the rigors of a northern winter; though I have heard that groves of the Bay are found on Fishing Creek, in Western Virginia, not far from Wheeling, and near the Ohio river. Could this tree be naturalized in Pennsylvania, it would form an ornament to her towns, cities and country seats, at once the most tasteful and the most delicious. A forest of these trees, in the month of May, resembles a wood, enveloped in an untimely fall of snow at midsummer, glowing in the rays of a morning sun.

We passed this day through cotton-fields and pine woods, alternately; but the scene was sometimes enlivened by the appearance of lots of corn and sweet potatoes, which, I observed, were generally planted near the houses. I afterwards learned that this custom of planting the corn and potatoes near the house of the planter, is generally all over Carolina. The object is to prevent the slaves from stealing, and thus procuring more food than, by the laws of the plantation, they are entitled to.

In passing through a lane, I this day saw a field which appeared to me to contain about fifty acres, in which people were at work with hoes, amongst a sort of plants that I had never seen before. I asked my master what this was, and he told me it was indigo. I shall have occasion to say more of this plant hereafter.

We at length arrived at the residence of my master, who descended from his chaise, and leaving me in charge of the horse at the gate, proceeded to the house across a long court yard. In a few minutes two young ladies, and a young gentleman, came out of the house, and walked to the gate, near which I was with the horse. One of the ladies said, they had come to look at me, and see what kind of a boy her pa had brought home with him. The other one said I was a very smart looking boy; and this compliment flattered me greatly – they being the first kind words that had been addressed to me since I left Maryland. The young gentleman asked me if I could run fast, and if I had ever picked cotton. His manner did not impress me so much in his favor, as the address of his sister had done for her. These three young persons were the son and daughters of my master. After looking at me a short time, my young master (for so I must now call him) ordered me to take the harness from the horse, give him water at a well which was near, and come into the kitchen, where some boiled rice was given me for my dinner.

I was not required to go to work this first day of my abode in my new residence; but after I had eaten my rice, my young master told me I might rest myself or walk out and see the plantation, but that I must be ready to go with the overseer the next morning.

CHAPTER VI

By the laws of the United States I am still a slave; and though I am now growing old, I might even yet be deemed of sufficient value to be worth pursuing as far as my present residence, if those to whom the law gives the right of dominion over my person and life, knew where to find me. For these reasons I have been advised, by those whom I believe to be my friends, not to disclose the true names of any of those families in which I was a slave, in Carolina or Georgia, lest this narrative should meet their eyes, and in some way lead them to a discovery of my retreat.

I was now the slave of one of the most wealthy planters in Carolina, who planted cotton, rice, indigo, corn, and potatoes; and was the master of two hundred and sixty slaves.

The description of one great cotton plantation will give a correct idea of all others; and I shall here present an outline of that of my master's.

He lived about two miles from Caugaree river, which bordered his estate on one side, and in the swamps of which were his rice fields. The country hereabout is very flat, the banks of the river are low, and in wet seasons large tracts of country are flooded by the super-abundant water of the river. There are no springs, and the only means of procuring water on the plantations is from wells, which must be sunk in general about twenty feet deep, before a constant supply of water can be obtained. My master

had two of these wells on his plantation – one at the mansion house, and one at the quarter.

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