

visited my wife and children, at Mr. Gatewoods's. I took leave of them with the belief that I should return with my master, as soon as he had seen his hands established on his new plantation. I took my children in my arms and embraced them; my wife who was a member of the Methodist church, implored the blessing of God upon me during my absence, and I turned away to follow my master.

Our journey was a long and tedious one, especially to those who were compelled to walk the whole distance. My master rode in a sulky, and I, as his body servant, on horseback. When we crossed over the Roanoke, and were entering upon North Carolina, I remember with what sorrowful countenances and language the poor slaves looked back for the last time upon the land of their nativity. It was their last farewell to Old Virginia. We passed through Georgia, and crossing the Chattahoochee, entered Alabama. Our way for many days was through a sandy tract of country, covered with pine woods, with here and there the plantation of an Indian or a half-breed. After crossing what is called Line Creek, we found large plantations along the road, at intervals of four or five miles. The aspect of the whole country was wild and forbidding, save to the eye of a cotton-planter. The clearings were all new, and the houses rudely constructed of logs. The cotton fields, were skirted with an enormous growth of oak, pine, and other wood. Charred stumps stood thickly in the clearings, with here and there a large tree girdled by the axe and left to decay. We reached at last the place of our destination. It was a fine tract of land with a deep rich soil. We halted on a small knoll, where the tents were pitched, and the wagons unladen. I spent the night with my master at a neighboring plantation, which was under the care of an overseer named Flincher.

The next morning my master received a visit from a man named Huckstep, who had undertaken the management of his plantation as an overseer. He had been an overseer on cotton plantations many years in Georgia and North Carolina. He was apparently about forty years of age, with a sunburnt and sallow countenance. His thick shock of black hair was marked in several places with streaks of white, occasioned as he afterwards told me by blows received from slaves whom he was chastising.

After remaining in the vicinity for about a week, my master took me aside one morning—told me he was going to Selma in Dallas County, and wished me to be in readiness on his return the next day, to start for Virginia. This was to me cheering news. I spent that day and the next among my old fellow servants who had lived with me in Virginia. Some of them had messages to send by me to their friends and acquaintances. In the afternoon of the second day after my master's departure, I distributed among them all the money which I had about me, viz., fifteen dollars. I noticed that the overseer Huckstep laughed at this and called me a fool: and that whenever I spoke of going home with my master, his countenance indicated something between a smile and a sneer.

Night came; but contrary to his promise, my master did not come. I still however expected him the next day. But another night came, and he had not returned. I grew uneasy, and inquired of Huckstep where he thought my master was.

"On his way to Old Virginia," said he, with a malicious laugh.

"But," said I. "Master George told me that he should come back and take me with him to Virginia."

"Well, boy," said the overseer, "I'll now tell ye what master George, as you call him, told me. You are to stay here and act as driver of the field hands. That was the order. So you may as well submit to it at once."

I stood silent and horror-struck. Could it be that the man whom I had served faithfully from our mutually boyhood, whose slightest wish had been my law, to serve whom I would have laid down my life, while I had confidence in his integrity—could it be that he had so cruelly and wickedly deceived me? I looked at the overseer. He stood laughing at me in my agony.

"Master George gave you no such orders," I exclaimed, maddened by the overseer's look and manner.

The overseer looked at me with a fiendish grin. "None of your insolence," said he, with a dreadful oath. "I never saw a Virginia nigger I couldnt manage, proud as they are. Your master has left you in my hands, and you must obey my orders. If you dont why I shall have to make you 'hug the widow there,' pining to a tree, to which I afterwards found the slaves were tied when they were whipped.

That night was one of sleepless agony. Virginia—the hills and the streams of my birth-place; the kind and hospitable home; the gentle-hearted sisters, sweetening with their sympathy the sorrows of the slave—my wife—my children—all that had thus far made up my happiness, rose in contrast with my present condition. Deeply as he has wronged me, may my master himself never endure such a night of misery!

At daybreak, Huckstep told me to dress myself, and attend to his directions. I rose, subdued and wretched, and at his orders handed the horn to the headman of the gang, who summoned the hands to the field. They were employed in clearing land for cultivation, cutting trees and burning. I was with them through the day, and at night returned once more to my lodgings to be laughed at by the overseer. He told me that I should do well, he did not doubt, by and by, but that a Virginia driver generally had to be whipped a few times himself before he could be taught to do justice to the slaves under his charge. They were not equal to those raised in North Carolina, for keeping the lazy hell hounds, as he called the slaves, at work.

And this was my condition!—a driver set over more than one hundred and sixty of my kindred and friends, with orders to apply the whip unsparingly to every one, whether man or woman, who faltered in the task, or was careless in the execution of it, myself subject at any moment to feel the accursed lash upon my own back, if feelings of humanity should perchance overcome the selfishness of misery, and induce me to spare and pity.

I lived in the same house with Huckstep—a large log house, roughly finished; where we were waited upon by an old woman, whom he used to call aunt Polly. Huckstep was, I soon found, inordinately fond of peach brandy; and once or twice in the course of a month he had a drunken debauch, which usually lasted from two to four days. He was then full of talk, laughed immoderately at his own nonsense, and would keep me up until late at night listening to him. He was at these periods terribly severe to his hands, and would order me to use up the cracker of my whip every day upon the poor creatures, who were toiling

in the field, and in order to satisfy him, I used to tear it off when returning home at night. He would then praise me for a good fellow, and invite me to drink with him.

He used to tell me at such times, that if I would only drink as he did, I should be worth a thousand dollars more for it. He would sit for hours with his peach brandy, cursing and swearing, laughing and telling stories full of obscenity and blasphemy. He would sometimes start up, take my whip, and rush out to the slave quarters, flourish it about and frighten the inmates and often cruelly beat them. He would order the women to pull up their clothes, in Alabama style, as he called it, and then whip them for not complying. He would then come back roaring and shouting to the house, and tell me what he had done; if I did not laugh with him, he would get angry and demand what the matter was. Oh! how often I have laughed, at such times, when my heart ached within me; and how often, when permitted to retire to my bed, have I found relief in tears!

He had no wife, but kept a colored mistress in a house situated on a gore of land between the plantation and that of Mr. Goldsby. He brought her with him from North Carolina, and had three children by her.

Sometimes in his fits of intoxication, he would come riding into the field, swinging his whip, and crying out to the hands to strip off their shirts, and be ready to take a whipping; and this too when they were all busily at work. At another time, he would gather the hands around him and fall to cursing and swearing about the neighbouring overseers. They were, he said, cruel to their hands, whipped them unmercifully, and in addition starved them. As for himself, he was the kindest and best fellow within forty miles; and the hands ought to be thankful that they had such a good man for their overseer.

He would frequently be very familiar with me, and call me his child; he would tell me that our people were going to get Texas, a fine cotton country, and that he meant to go out there and have a plantation of his own, and I should go with him and be his overseer.

The houses in the "negro quarters" were constructed of logs, and from twelve to fifteen feet square; they had no glass, but there were holes to let in the light and air. The furniture consisted of a table, a few stools, and dishes made of wood, and an iron pot, and some other cooking utensils. The houses were placed about three or four rods apart, with a piece of ground attached to each of them for a garden, where the occupant could raise a few vegetables. The "quarters" were about three hundred yards from the dwelling of the overseer.

The hands were occupied in clearing land and burning brush, and in constructing their houses, through the winter. In March we commenced ploughing; and on the first of April began planting seed for cotton. The hoeing season commenced about the last of May. At the earliest dawn of day, and frequently before that time, the laborers were roused from their sleep by the blowing of the horn. It was blown by the headman of the gang who led the rest in the work and acted under my direction, as my assistant.

Previous to the blowing of the horn the hands generally rose and eat what was called the "morning's bit," consisting of ham and bread. If exhaustion and fatigue prevented their rising before the dreaded sound of the horn broke upon their slumbers, they had no time to snatch a mouthful, but were hurried out at once.

It was my business to give over to each of the hands his or her appropriate implement of labor, from the tool-house where they were deposited at night. After all had been supplied, they were taken to the field, and set at work as soon as it was sufficiently light to distinguish the plants from the grass and weeds. I was employed in passing from row to row, in order to see that the work was well done, and to urge forward the laborers. At 12 o'clock, the horn was blown from the overseer's house, calling the hands to dinner, each to his own cabin. The intermission of labor was one hour and a half to hoers and pickers, and two hours to the ploughmen. At the expiration of this interval, the horn again summoned them to their labor. They were kept in the field until dark, when they were called home to supper.

There was little leisure for any of the hands on the plantation. In the evenings, after it was too dark for work in the field, the men were frequently employed in burning brush and in other labors, until late at night. The women, after toiling in the field by day, were compelled to card, spin, and weave cotton for their clothing, in the evening. Even on Sundays there was little or no respite from toil. Those who had not been able to work out all their task during the week, were allowed by the overseer to finish it on the Sabbath, and thus save themselves from a whipping on Monday morning. Those whose tasks were finished frequently employed most of that day in cultivating their gardens.

Many of the female hands were delicate young women, who in Virginia had never been accustomed to field labor. They suffered greatly from the extreme heat and the severity of the toil. Oh! how often have I seen them dragging their weary limbs from the cotton field at nightfall, faint and exhausted. The overseer used to laugh at their suffering. They were, he said, Virginia ladies, and altogether too delicate for Alabama use; but they must be made to do their tasks notwithstanding. The recollection of these things even now is dreadful. I used to tell the poor creatures, when compelled by the overseer to urge them forward with the whip, that I would much rather take their places, and endure the stripes than inflict them.

When but three months old, the children born on the estate were given up to the care of the old women who were not able to work out of doors. Their mothers were kept at work in the field.

It was the object of the overseer to separate me in feeling, and interest as widely as possible from my suffering brethren and sisters. I had relations among the field hands, and used to call them my cousins. He forbid my doing so; and told me if I acknowledged relationship with any of the hands I should be flogged for it. He used to speak of them as devils and hell-hounds, and ridicule them in every possible way; and endeavoured to make me speak of them and regard them in the same manner. He would tell long stories about hunting and shooting "runaway niggers," and detail with great apparent satisfaction the cruel and horrid punishments which he had inflicted. One thing he said troubled him. He had once whipped a slave so severely that he died in consequence of it, and it was soon after ascertained that he was wholly innocent of the offence charged against him. That slave, he said, had haunted him ever since.

Soon after we commenced weeding our cotton, some of the

hands who were threatened with a whipping for not finishing their tasks, ran away. The overseer and myself went out after them, taking with us five blood-hounds, which were kept on the estate for the sole purpose of catching runaways. There were no other hounds in the vicinity, and the overseers of the neighboring plantations used to borrow them to hunt their runaways. A Mr. Crop, who lived about ten miles distant, had two packs, and made it his sole business to catch slaves with them. We used to set the dogs upon the track of the fugitives, and they would follow them until, to save themselves from being torn in pieces, they would climb into a tree, where the dogs kept them until we came up and secured them.

These hounds, when young, are taught to run after the negro boys; and being always kept confined except when let out in pursuit of runaways, they seldom fail of overtaking the fugitive, and seem to enjoy the sport of hunting men as much as other dogs do that of chasing a fox or a deer. My master gave a large sum for his five dogs,—a slut and her four puppies.

While going over our cotton picking for the last time, one of our hands named Little John, ran away. The next evening the dogs were started on his track. We followed them awhile, until we knew by their ceasing to bark that they had found him. We soon met the dogs returning. Their jaws, heads, and feet, were bloody. The overseer looked at them, and said, "he was afraid the dogs had killed the nigger." It being dark, we could not find him that night. Early the next morning, we started off with our neighbors, Sturivant and Flincher; and after searching about for some time, we found the body of Little John lying in the midst of a thicket of cane. It was nearly naked, and dreadfully mangled and gashed by the teeth of the dogs. They had evidently dragged it some yards through the thicket: blood, tatters of clothes, and even the entrails of the unfortunate man, were clung over his saddle, looked at the body, and muttered an oath. Sturivant swore it was no more than the fellow deserved. We dug a hole in the cane-brake, where he lay, buried him, and returned home.

The murdered young man had a mother and two sisters on the plantation, by whom he was dearly loved. When I told the old woman of what had befallen her son, she only said that it was better for poor John than to live in slavery.

Late in the fall of this year, a young man, who had already run away several times, was missing from his task. It was four days before we found him. The dogs drove him at last up a tree, where he was caught, and brought home. He was then fastened down to the ground by means of forked sticks of wood selected for the purpose, the longest fork being driven into the ground until the other closed down upon the neck, ancles, and wrists. The overseer then sent for two large cats belonging to the house. These he placed upon the naked shoulders of his victim, and dragged them suddenly by their tails downward. At first they did not scratch deeply. He then ordered me to strike them with a small stick after he had placed them once more upon the back of the sufferer. I did so; and the enraged animals extended their claws, and tore his back deeply and cruelly as they were dragged along it. He was then whipped and placed in the stocks, where he was kept three days. On the third morning as I passed the stocks, I stooped to look at him. His head hung down over the chain which supported his neck. I spoke, but he did not answer. He was dead in the stocks! The overseer of seeing him seemed surprised, and, I thought, manifested some remorse. Four of the field hands took him out of the stocks and buried him, and every thing went on as usual.

It is not in my power to give a narrative of the daily occurrences on the plantation. The history of one day was that of all. The gloomy monotony of our slavery, was only broken by the overseer's periodical fits of drunkenness, at which time neither life nor limb on the estate were secure from his caprice or violence.

In the spring of 1835, the overseer brought me a letter from my wife, written for her by her young mistress, Mr. Gatewood's daughter. He read it to me: it stated that herself and children were well—spoke of her sad and heavy disappointment in consequence of my not returning with my master; and of her having been told by him that I should come back the next fall. Hope for a moment lightened my heart; and I indulged the idea of once more returning to the bosom of my family. But I recollected that my master had already cruelly deceived me; and despair again took hold on me.

Among our hands was one whom we used to call Big Harry. He was a stout, athletic man—very intelligent, and an excellent workman; but he was of a high and proud spirit, which the weary and crushing weight of a life of slavery had not been able to subdue. On almost every plantation at the South you may find one or more individuals, whose look and air show that they have preserved their self-respect as men;—that with them the power of the tyrant ends with the coercion of the body—that the soul is free, and the inner man retaining the original uprightness of the image of God. You may know them by the stern regard of their countenances, and the contempt with which they regard the jests and pastimes of their miserable and degraded companions, who, like Samson, make sport for the keepers of their prison-house. These men are always feared as well as hated by their task-masters. Harry had never been whipped, and had always said that he would die rather than submit to it. He made no secret of his detestation of the overseer. While most of the slaves took off their hats, with cowering submission, in his presence, Harry always refused to do so. He never spoke to him except in a brief answer to his questions. Master George, who knew, and dreaded the indomitable spirit of the man, told the overseer before he left the plantation, to beware how he attempted to punish him. But the habits of tyranny in which Huckstep had so long indulged, had accustomed him to abject submission, on the part of his subjects; and he could not endure this upright and unbroken manliness. He used frequently to curse and swear at him, and devise plans for punishing him on account of his independence as he called it.

A pretext was at last afforded him. Sometime in August of this year, there was a large quantity of yellow unpicked cotton lying in the gin house. Harry was employed at night in removing the cotton seed, which had been thrown out by the gin. The rest of the male hands were engaged during the day in weeding the cotton for the last time, and in the night, in burning brush on the new lands clearing for the next year's crop. Harry was told one evening to go with the others and assist in burning the brush. He accordingly went; and the next night a double quantity of