

THE REALITIES OF SLAVERY.

To the Editor of *The N. Y. Tribune*.

SIR: During the latter part of June, or first of July, there appeared in *Harper's Weekly Journal of Civilization* two excellent illustrations, representing some of the real beauties of that "Divine Institution," as faithfully portrayed upon the bare back of a scourged negro, which was horribly scarred, and lacerated in a terrible manner by the blood-stained whip of a "driver."

The second wood-cut gave a faithful and lifelike representation of a negro slave sitting for his photograph, clad in the peculiar and ragged nondescript habiliments of the plantation, tattered, torn, and barefooted. These engravings were accompanied by a short descriptive account, which very briefly stated that the negro whose bare back attested the excruciating ordeal of torture through which he had passed, was whipped in this brutal manner by an "overseer," as the inhuman "drivers" are delicately called by the admirers and devotees of human bondage. My object in thus referring to these revolting pictures of the real "barbarism of Slavery," at this late day, is to contradict the malicious falsehoods that have appeared in the Rebel organs of the North. No sooner had this heart-sickening picture begun to circulate, and awaken a thrill of horror among the loyal and humane portion of the community, than the Copperhead press at once spirted forth their poisonous venom, and boldly asserted that the whole story was a fabrication from beginning to end—the fruitful results of a fanatical Abolitionist's deluded imagination. This prejudiced and inconsistent statement was copied into nearly all the Pro-Slavery organs, for they deemed it a monstrosity that should not go unpunished, notwithstanding Messrs. Harper & Bro. announced that the wood-cuts were exact copies from the original photographs, taken from life by McPherson & Oliver at Baton Rouge, La. It will thus be seen that not only did these venal sheets endeavor to deride the whole exposure of the outrage, and thereby deceive the public, but they deliberately and willfully attempted to cast the stigma of falsity and untrustworthiness upon this loyal and honorable publishing firm. Since the publication of the above pictures in *Harpers' Weekly* the friends of freedom in New-York and Boston have purchased "carte de visite" size photograph copies of the abused negro, as a faithful picture of the realities of Slavery as it exists in the Southern States. Through the mysterious agencies of the camera obscura the most wonderful as well as beautiful results have been obtained, and it is to the genius and perseverance of Daguerre and M. Niepce that we of the nineteenth century to-day behold the outside view of the moon and the inside view of Slavery. The light of heaven that shoots through well-defined lenses of the camera, and quick as a flash precipitates the outlines of the image upon the chemically-prepared plate within, cannot and does not lie. All the logic of the blind and infatuated believers in Human Slavery cannot arrest or thwart the progress of truth, any more than they can prevent the development of the positive picture, when aided by the silent and powerful process of chemical action.

With this much of an explanatory introduction, permit me to saturate this "Copperhead" falsehood with a considerable solution of truth, and it will not require a very great exercise of metaphysical ingenuity on the part of your loyal readers to detect that the sunlight of truth has developed, printed, and made indelible a positive fact. The original photographs from which the two faithful engravings in *Harper's Weekly* were copied I brought from Louisiana last June, and I can therefore vouch for their entire accuracy, as well as for the truthfulness of the brief account of the outrages perpetrated upon the unoffending negroes which was published in connection with the pictures.

On the 24th of last March, four negroes, the property of Capt. John Lyon and Louis Fabyan of Clinton, La., started off at midnight in search of freedom, which they well knew would be guaranteed them as soon as they reached our lines at Baton Rouge, La. Their departure was quietly effected, and during the night they traveled at a rapid rate, not daring to venture out of their hiding-places during the day, for fear of being captured by the "hunters" or gangs of guerrillas that infested the woods for miles, and surrounded the swamps. The second day, one of the party, "John," ventured out in search of food. He had not been gone more than half an hour when the loud report of firearms startled and terribly alarmed his companions. Believing that poor "John" had fallen into the hands of the "hunters" or guerrillas, they kept secluded all that day. The fears of these oppressed creatures, as they hid in the decayed trunks of old trees, surrounded on all sides by swamps and turbid bayous, the delectable abode of the most poisonous snakes, venomous reptiles, and the scaly alligator, can be imagined, but not described.

Night came, and the timid party set out on their perilous journey, hoping to reach our lines next day. Passing through a sugar plantation, they stopped at one of the negro huts (described as neat, comfortable cottages, by the Pro-Slavery writers), where they were furnished with quite a liberal quantity of such wretched food as the slaves receive from their humane, generous, and chivalrous masters. It was here that the dreadful tale was told of the murder of poor "John." He had been shot by one of the brave and chivalrous hunters, Jim Fassel, a notorious villain—the fear of every colored person for miles around. This same murderer, the day before, had assisted in the butchery of the young mulatto slave of 21 years, an intelligent "field hand," who had escaped from a cruel master at Vicksburg, Miss. It seems that this young man had been concerned in a sort of conspiracy aiding and advising the flight of able-bodied men to our lines for the purpose of enlisting in our army. Hearing that his master suspected him, he resolved to decamp, and success seemed to crown his efforts for freedom until the sixth day, when, a large reward being offered by the Rebel planters for his capture, or murder, a band of "hunters," with a pack of panting hounds thirsting for blood, set out on full chase for the fugitive. At Cypress Bayou, about ten or twelve miles from Baton Rouge, he was overtaken in a small swamp, having eluded the track of his enraged and heartless pursuers for six days. Most of the time he was obliged to go without food, not daring to show himself even to the slaves. Completely exhausted, with his coarse garments hanging in shreds, he sought refuge in the branches of a large tree, but the bloodhounds scented his track—until one of them, howling at the foot of the tree, attracted the attention of the "man hunters." Their discovery was signaled by the utterance of the most horrible oaths, shouting for the unfortunate man to come down out of the tree. He was in the act of doing so, but begged most piteously for the inhuman wretches to call off their savage hounds, who flocked around the tree anxious to satisfy their bloody appetite. His request was answered by another oath, followed by the whistling of a bullet, which lodged in his thigh, bringing him to the ground, where he was set upon by the hounds, and his face terribly lacerated. His captors desired to return with him alive to the planters in the vicinity of Vicksburg, who had so generously offered a large reward for his capture—and it was this circumstance alone that saved him from being entirely torn to pieces by the bloodhounds.

With exultant shouts and fearful imprecations upon their lips, they placed the half-lifeless and bleeding body upon a horse, and, supported by one of the "hunters," the brutal party started on their way back with their victim. After riding a few miles, they alighted at the house of a "bushwhacker." Here they remained an hour or two, imbibing freely of that gunpowder stimulant known as "Louisiana whisky." Excited almost to frenzy, they galloped some four or five miles, till they reached a small bayou, where they halted to water their horses. The wrath of Heaven had manifested itself during that death-gallop, and a righteous God interposed, and with His silent and mysterious power He summoned the agonized soul to the bar of judgment, snatching it from the clutches of these demons while they were gloating over the fiendish tortures in store for their innocent and helpless victim. While in the act of adjusting a portion of his harness, the "hunter" holding the bleeding captive discovered that the vital spark had fled. They were greatly enraged to think they were obliged

to carry an inanimate piece of flesh. The body was carried in this way to Jackson, where its arrival was welcomed by a brutal crowd, who complimented the "hunters" upon their success, and heaped the vilest anathemas upon the remains, that, bleeding, torn, and disfigured, lay before them. One of the planters, who had lost several negroes since the Emancipation Proclamation, called all his slaves together, and compelled them to witness the burial of the murdered man in a ditch adjoining his plantation.

"POOR PETER"

is the name of the negro whose lacerated back, as presented in the original photograph, has excited both the sympathy and indignation of every humanitarian that has seen it. Here is his own statement, taken from his lips April 2, 1863, at Baton Rouge, La., just after he had entered the Provost-Marshal's office. It may be well to state that "Peter" could speak but little English, and that in broken accents. The majority of the negroes of Louisiana are owned by Frenchmen or those of French descent, and nearly all speak French; indeed, thousands were to be found along our line of march who could not understand a word of English.

Being interrogated in French, "Poor Peter," who stood before us the picture of poverty, shrouded in rags of every imaginable color, began his doleful story. "Ten days from to-day I left the plantation, run away from massa." "What made you run away, Peter; was your master ugly—did he whip you?" With a peculiar shrug of his shoulders, and raising his eyes toward the ceiling he shouted, "Lor Gor Almighty Massa! look here"—and suiting the action to the word, he pulled down the pile of dirty rags that half concealed his back, and which was once a shirt, and exhibited his mutilated sable form to the crowd of officers and others present in the office. It sent a thrill of horror to every white person present, but the few Blacks who were waiting for passes, both men, women and children, paid but little attention to the sad spectacle, such terrible scenes being painfully familiar to them all. "Who whipped you, Peter?" "Overseer Artayon Carrier whipped me—I don't remember the whipping. I was two months in bed, sore from the whipping and salt brine, which Overseer put on my back. By and by my senses began to come—they said I was sort of crazy, and tried to shoot everybody. I did not know it—I did not know that I had attempted to shoot any one—they told me so. I burned up all my clothes, but I don't remember that. I never was this way (crazy) before. I don't know what make me come that way (crazy). My master came after I was whipped—saw me in bed. He discharged the overseer. They told me I attempted to shoot my wife first one. I did not shoot any one. I did not harm any one. My wife tell me I no do these things when I come away. She thought I was dead with whipping. My master's name is Captain John Lyon, cotton planter, on Atchafalaya River, near Washington, La. I was whipped two months before Christmas."

The above is a verbatim copy of the original statement of "Poor Peter," as written upon the back of the photograph at Baton Rouge, La., a few hours after it was printed. If "Copperheads" still doubt the authenticity of either the pictures or the narrative, the originals of both are open for free inspection and criticism. "Poor Peter," with "Gordon," the sable youth clad in variegated and torn garments, and whose likeness also appeared at the same time in *Harper's Weekly*, together with another negro, reached our lines at Baton Rouge, La., in safety, after enduring untold hardships. They were in a feeble condition, hunger having greatly reduced them and exhausted their energies.

Although half famished, and their swollen feet bleeding at every pore, they could not refrain from weeping with joy when their colored brethren surrounded them, clothed in the Federal uniform, and offered them plenty of food and warm clothing.

All of these men were chased by "hunters" with their savage packs of hounds, but they were ingenious enough to wade and swim through every stream they could find on their way, twice swimming the turbid waters of the Amite River in their wanderings. Upon coming from the water, they had presence of mind and sagacity enough to rub every portion of their body with onions and strong-scented weeds, in order to elude the trail of the bloodhounds, who were several times close upon them. To their intelligence may be attributed their narrow and fortunate escape from the terrible fate that befell "Poor John," their companion. This concludes my narrative of the two pictures, libeled by the Pro-Slavery press as "the fruitful results of a fanatical Abolitionist's deluded imagination."

Another incident will illustrate the character of the "Divine Institution." During the month of July, 1861, an old gray-haired negro, sixty years of age, the property of Doreaz Breeon, a very wealthy planter in Louisiana, was arrested and thrown into prison—the horrible calaboose of New-Orleans. By order of his master, he had been imprisoned and fifty lashes laid upon his bare back, upon the charge of attempting to "run off." Imagine the feelings of the decrepit old man, upon entering his cell, to behold his youngest boy, "Dickey," chained to the floor, whom he had not seen for three months, and had given up all hopes of ever meeting him, believing he had been sold into slavery in Mississippi. The old man begged so piteously to be placed near his child, that the Jailer consented, and he was accordingly chained by the side of his son. For three weeks poor "Louis" endured the torture of chains upon his neck and ankles, which were fastened to the filthy stone floor by iron rings, while his hands were manacled. The food consisted of a very small quantity of soup, more properly speaking, oily water, containing a little nourishment from tainted meat, which was given to the slaves in tin dippers holding a pint. Half a cupful of boiled hominy three times a day, without any bread or vegetables, made up the other rations of these enslaved and abused creatures from day to day. No bedding of any kind was furnished, but they were allowed to lie down with their chains upon them upon the cold, damp and moldy stone floor. A large number of slaves were incarcerated within the foul walls of this soul-sickening calaboose, principally upon charges of "attempting to run away," although a number were confined there and brutally punished for "safe keeping," as the slaveholders style it. The presence of so large a number of slaves within this sepulchre was owing to the negroes hearing of the near approach of the "Yankees." Many women and children were there, chained to the floors, upon mere suspicion of talking about the expected advent of the "Yankees" under "Massa Butler," when they would all be free.

During the noise and confusion of the slaves little Dickey, who had got possession of a piece of broken file, determined to release his father if possible. Watching his chances each day, by exercising the greatest vigilance, he managed to file the links that bound his father's neck and ankles to the ground. The old man, thus unfettered, succeeded in slipping his handcuffs, and at noon time, while the keeper was busily engaged, escaped as some teams were leaving the prison yard. He fled as rapidly as his infirmities would allow him to the new Custom-House, then building in New-Orleans, and with the chains around his neck and ankles he presented himself before several of our officers and soldiers who were then quartered in the Custom-House.

With the assistance of Capt. Spring of the 26th Massachusetts Regiment, Col. Farr, whose regiment was then acting as Provost-Guard of the city, and the help of several soldiers, these brutal implements of a barbarous institution were with considerable difficulty removed. The next day the inhuman outrage was reported to Gen. Butler, who forthwith ordered a full investigation of the calaboose, and immediately released all the slaves confined except those who were charged with crime as understood by loyal judges. It is not for me to attempt to portray the emotions of the aged father as he once more clasped his son to his bosom free, and acknowledging but one master. "Louis" was the father of five children; but Doreaz Breeon, his Rebel master, fled from New-Orleans upon the approach of the Union fleet to the city, and carried off four of the old man's children to Mississippi; and the father has heard nothing of them since. Louis was used by his master as a house servant, and in the evening, after his labors for the day were over, he worked all night making cigars for a neighboring tobacconist. In this way he had managed to save some \$70 in gold. Doreaz Breeon, esq., planter and slave-owner of Louisiana, robbed his "poor old slave" of these hard earnings, with which he fondly hoped to be able to purchase the freedom of one of his children. "Old Uncle Louis," as he is familiarly called by our soldiers—with his mutilated wrists and numerous scars upon the neck and ankles—is still living in New-Orleans, employed as a servant at the Provost Guard Office, in Barron street.