

# The American Citizen, Butler County Pa.

December 23, 1863

## 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 bare-footed. 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-striking 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 spit 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 *Harper's 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. Niepee 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 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 sensed his track—until one of them, howling at the foot of the tree, attracted the attention of the 'man hunters.' Their discovery was signalled 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 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 'bushwacker.' Here they remained an hour or two, imbibing freely of that gunpowder stimulant known as 'Louisiana whiskey.' 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 that 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 towards 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—aw 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 tho't 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 *Harpers Weekly*, together with another negro, reached our lines at Baton Rouge, La., in safety, after enduring untold hardships. They were in 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 pack 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."

*New York, Nov. 12, 1863.*

BOSTONIAN.