

## SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN THE COLONIES.\*

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SEAL OF THE LORDS PROPRIETORS OF CAROLINA—REVERSE. (FROM AN IMPRESSION IN THE ENGLISH STATE-PAPER OFFICE.)

### I.

#### CUSTOMS RELATING TO LAND.

THE transplanted Englishman of the seventeenth century, for the most part, clung with tenacity to his heritage of ancient customs and prejudices. As the original current of a great river holds the peculiar tint derived from its banks, after the banks are left behind and the stream has pushed far out to sea, so English life in the New World was slow to lose its characteristics in novel conditions; only by degrees did the powerful reaction of new circumstances bring about differences between the English planted in America and those who remained in the old nursery.

The mode of holding, transferring, and inheriting land always exerts a marked influence on society. English settlers brought with

them notions and customs respecting landed estate that had grown up in the long ages of tribal and national development before and after the coming of the English clans from the continent. These they applied to land-holdings in America, without thought of their unfitness. To take a minor example: Among the first colonists land was often transferred by the ancient ceremony known as *livery of seisin*. The seller stood upon the tract that had been sold, and, plucking a twig from a bush or tree, passed it into the hand of the purchaser, or gave a bit of turf with a twig stuck in it, and in some cases a splinter, also. If there was a house, the seller took hold of the ring of the house-door and formally gave it to the new owner. The ground, with its products and appurtenances, was thus symbolically delivered in a manner very suitable to illiterate times and restricted territories.

\* The limit of a magazine article does not allow of the discussion of other social conditions than the two capital ones, land-holding and labor. The engravings of colonial houses supplement rather than illustrate the text, by giving pictorially another phase of the subject.

But in the colonies land soon came to be, as it is with us now, an article of merchandise and speculation, passing frequently from owner to owner. Remote and unsurveyed tracts of wilderness could not well be handed over "by twig and turf." In Maryland the bare certificate entitling the holder to take up land came

Not only the ancient methods of transferring and bounding real property, but the ancient notions of land tenure, crossed the sea with the English. At first America seemed destined to be a country of great lords and their liegemen. All the territory embraced in the thirteen colonies was at one time or



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presently to be passed about as current money. In some places laws were made, after a while, to cover the omission of livery of seisin, and it gradually passed out of use, lingering latest in Virginia, the oldest and most conservative of the colonies.

Other antique customs relating to land found lodgment for a while in America. Once in four years, between Easter and Whitsunday, the Virginians were required to make formal processions about the bounds of their several tracts, renewing the marks in the line trees. When a division line had been thus traced three times, it might never afterward be disputed. In Massachusetts, Connecticut, and on Long Island, the townships, as corporate land-holders, were to "go the rounds" at regular intervals, and each individual owner of plow-land, mow-land, and forest within a "town" must trace his boundary every winter, if his next neighbor exacted it. The colonists were thus following a custom whose origin is lost in the obscurity of the ages before written records.

another covered by grants made to proprietaries. In some regions royal grants overlaid and overlapped one another in bewildering confusion. Most of these grants were without result; yet, at the close of the reign of Charles II., the greater part of the coast was in process of settlement in subjection to feudal or semi-feudal proprietors. Land-holding almost everywhere in the colonial period retained some features of feudalism. In Virginia a quit-rent of a shilling for every fifty acres was paid to the crown or to some grantee of the crown; the people of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Carolina paid a similar tax to proprietary lords. In New York, also, the Crown exacted quit-rents, and the tenants of Dutch patroons brought an annual acknowledgment of feudal service, it might be of five pounds of butter, two loads of wood, or a pair of chickens. In Maryland the traditional pair of capons was sometimes added to a rental of Indian corn. Land was rarely conveyed by a proprietary without at least a nominal rental to save the dignity of the lordship. The commonest of fictitious rents

was the pepper-corn; for instance, the land given in 1693 to Trinity Church, New York, was subject to a payment of one pepper-corn annually. In South Carolina, in one case, a single ear of maize was to be paid yearly for three thousand acres. Lord Baltimore sometimes exacted a bushel of corn, a capon, a pair of pullets, an Indian arrow, or a buck's foot. Such great proprietors as Baltimore held their territories as under-lords to the Crown. Lord Baltimore was obliged to render to the sovereign two Indian arrows every year in Easter week in token of fealty. Penn, perhaps because he was a Quaker, paid two beaver-skins instead of the weapons of war, which were a customary recognition of title by *petit-serjeanty*. The lords proprietors naturally sought to complete in their provinces the aristocratic hierarchy of which they were part; but the "manors" in Pennsylvania and the "baronies" and "manors" in Carolina appear to have been such in name only. In Maryland some manors for a while held courts-leet and courts-baron, after the ancient fashion of such lordships in England. In New York, where the English feudal system was grafted on the Dutch patroonships, the manors had local courts and a representation that made the owners of these estates hereditary legislators with immense influence.

There was a mode of land-holding in some parts of England older than the Norman conquest, far older even than the migration of the English tribes from the continent, whose origin, indeed, antedates the remotest history and the most ancient traditions of our race. The people of a township anciently held their land under the manor-lord, allotting a portion of each of their fields every year to each family according to its rank or wealth. The advancement of civilization relaxed this severe communism; the little acre or half-acre bits of arable land scattered here and there over the fields of the town were given in perpetuity to the several members of the community. But the division of the land retained marks of the older order; each man had many little patches widely scattered, and the meadow, the pasture, and the woodland were sometimes still held in common. The fences and gates of the common fields were kept up by the proportionate labor of each man in the town, and the rents of the lord were paid by the community. This system was still in full vigor in parts of England until the present century, nor is it yet quite extinct.

It was this township plan that obtained generally in New England and in parts of New York and New Jersey. From the beginning of these colonies the Puritans fenced

their fields together, and shared upland, meadow, and woodland between the families in proportion to their investment, their social importance, and some other qualifications not now easily made out. The phraseology and methods of the English communities were retained; the "furlongs," that is, "furrows," held by each family were fenced in common fields, and sometimes for a few years after settlement were cultivated without a permanent division of property — a method very ancient, and for the most part disused at that time in England. Each New England family in a town held land in several widely separated pieces. In some towns these were all sold together as appertaining to the "house-lot." Each individual had his proportionate "house-lot right" and "acre right" in the undivided meadow, forest, and other estate of the "town." The times of planting and of turning in cattle were regulated in "field-meetings," after the immemorial usage of the English township.

The town communities were, in some places, intermingled with large "independent farms." The communities existed without a manor-lord in Massachusetts, while the East Jersey towns paid "the lord's half-penny," as they called it, on every acre, and the New York towns paid a quit-rent to the Crown. If, now, we inquire why these common holdings did not thrive to the southward of New Jersey, we have asked a question not to be readily answered in the present state of our knowledge. The problem is older than the settlement of America. William Marshall, the first to describe such communities in England, found, in 1786, all the people on one side of a range of hills holding common lands, while those beyond held their ground independently, and he suggested that the two regions had been settled by immigrations from diverse portions of the continent. It would be an interesting subject for inquiry whether the first comers of the Puritans, or their leaders, emigrated from a region of common holdings.

But common lands were not unknown in the middle and southern colonies. In Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware the earliest unit of association was the "hundred," — a name derived from a very ancient division of the English shire. We find in the meager accounts that have come to us that land was early granted to the Virginia hundreds in large bodies, and the hundreds appear to have made dividends to individuals somewhat as did the "towns" in New England. The hundreds of Virginia also sequestered, or at least retained, land for "commons"; two of them had assignments of "commons" of fifteen hundred acres apiece, and there

were also public lands given at first to "each particular borough." All the way down the coast the projected towns for trade had "commons" attached. Efforts were made to found in Carolina "townships with privileges," that is, perhaps, townships with local autonomy like those of New England; and at a later period, under the lead of Governor Robert Johnson, new settlers were located in townships of twenty thousand acres each.

But in the north-eastern colonies there were strong selective reasons in favor of the ancient village system with its localized government. The Puritan minister gathered his people into a compact brotherhood; no man might live far away from the meeting-house. So intimate was the relation between church and township, that the people of Guilford in the New Haven colony vested the fee of their undivided lands in the church. The church was a powerful force, from within, holding the town compacted, and the almost unflagging hostility of the savages for nearly a hundred years gave a pressure from without, making it convenient to live, not upon farms, but upon home-lots; and thus the old English land community acquired a new vigor in crossing the sea.

There was that which made all plans for towns of no avail in the South,—a centrifugal force that broke down representation by boroughs or townships in Virginia, and made the parish a vast region with little corporate unity, on account of the rarefaction of the population, and rendered the "commons" of the early hundreds of no benefit. This was the lighting upon a staple. If tobacco, rice, or indigo had been profitable at the North, all the power of habit, tradition, and religion, with Indian hostility superadded, could not have kept the townspeople to their home-lots about the church, their patches of plow-land and meadow, and their "acre rights" in woodland and pasture. The desire for profit would have made men, there as elsewhere, spread abroad to cut and burn fertile patches in the forests, seeking new fields for the staple. But fishing, trading, and manufacturing for trade became the favorite callings; and nothing could have been better suited to these forms of life in that day than the belt of half-agricultural, half-seafaring villages that skirted the coast and dotted the river banks from Long Island north-eastward, all of them formed on the township model derived from the *ham*, or ancient Saxon manor, with the lord and his rentals left out.

## II.

### MODIFICATIONS OF THE LAND SYSTEM.

EVERY English notion about land, and every method of English land tenure, found

place in America for a while; but a process of natural selection, after a little time, began to eliminate those features of each system that were unfit to survive in the new conditions. The common field of the town community could no more remain than the manor with its tenants owing fealty to a lord. The common-field system was distinctly recognized in some places as a temporary make-shift, and individual shares began to be separately inclosed at an early day. The system was becoming antiquated even in England, and the wide-spread movement there during the last hundred years for an improvement in husbandry has almost done away with it. The agitation for division began earlier still in America. By the time the seventeenth century had run its course and the theocracy had lost its grip, inhabitants of town communities in many parts of New England and New York were moving actively to disentangle their interests from those of their neighbors, and this was accomplished after many hot debates. It is only in out-of-the-way places, where human life lies stranded, that one can now find lands held in common by the town.

The first Virginia tenants were little better than villeins; they were bound to remain seven years on the land, and to pay one-half of the whole produce for rent. In a new country such a system quickly broke down. The owner of thousands of acres in Maryland long continued to call his plantation a manor; but tenants soon ceased to swear fealty to the lord, holding one end of a rod in the court-leet, while the lord's steward held the other. Land was abundant. Servants and slaves might be purchased cheap. Why should not a tenant become a lord and keep his capons himself? Tobacco, rice, and slavery undermined the feudal system at the South. The aristocracy, old and new, continued to hold many notions derived from feudalism; servants and slaves took the place of tenants, and the great gentleman was still distinguished by the breadth of his acres and the multitude of his retainers.

The greatness of the tracts of land in royal colonies engrossed by favorites of the governors, and especially by members of the council, was a monstrous evil. Secretary Claiborne received in Virginia forty-six thousand acres. At a later period Spotswood had forty-five thousand acres in one tract; and the second William Byrd, besides princely territories in Virginia, got a slice of North Carolina eighteen miles in length. Colonel Robert Carter was known as "King Carter," from his vast estates; and the Virginia territory which paid quit-rent to Lord Fairfax was truly royal in

extent, covering an area that now embraces more than twenty counties. Baronies of twelve thousand acres were granted in South Carolina — sometimes four of them in a lump. In Maryland, Charles Carroll had twenty thousand acres in one tract.

In New York, the grants were "almost as large as provinces," in the words of Lewis Morris. The Courtlands had two tracts, each twenty miles square; Livingston had one, sixteen by twenty-four miles; the Rensselaer manor extended twenty-four miles each way. At a later period three proprietors held more than a million acres apiece. While the land held out, royal governors had a sure means of political influence and an unailing source of wealth. One governor of New York is said to have exacted a secret share of one-third in every grant that he made. Lord Cornbury paid Lady Cornbury's funeral expenses by a grant of land at Newtown. Meantime the province of New York languished, immigrants avoided it, and for half a century the young people born upon its soil moved away in a steady stream to New Jersey and Pennsylvania to escape the exactions of the great proprietors, who at first construed their feudal privileges most strictly, claiming even the right to re-assume the land of tenants, as though it were merely "folk-land" and the tenant without any right whatever. The injustice of land monopoly and rent-tax was very apparent in a country where the ground lay for the most part unoccupied; violent discontents arose in New York fifty years before the close of the colonial period. As soon as the first tremblings of the revolutionary upheaval were felt, agrarian riots broke out; but, by espousing the cause of the colonists against the king, the greater number of the New York landlords held their own throughout the revolutionary struggle, and the manors survived to contend with later riots of the tenantry, and to go down at last under the democratic legislation of the post-revolutionary time.

Quit-rents were avoided and evaded in the colonies wherever this was possible, and they seem to have been generally in arrears. In New Hampshire, in New Jersey, and in North Carolina, as in New York, violent resistance was sometimes offered to the claim of the landlord. In Virginia the monopolies of the great land-owners in Spotswood's time led to a powerful democratic movement which filled the Assembly with men of low birth. In Pennsylvania the quit-rents were a perpetual source of dissatisfaction. Everywhere there appeared the tendency, more or less strong, to a simple and direct ownership of the

soil by the occupant — the system that has finally prevailed in this country.

The primitive land systems lasted long enough to exert a considerable influence upon the people. If we consider extreme examples this becomes evident. The inhabitant of the town community was trained to association with his fellows. Measures were taken to promote village life; laws were made in Connecticut, in 1650, against consolidating house-lots, and the dwellers in Andover were forbidden to live upon their plow-land, lest their hogs and cattle should injure the common meadows. Artisans were secured by the community. Newark, for example, reserved a lot for the miller, another for the town's tailor, another for the boatman, and so on. A town in one case kept a flock of sheep for the public benefit. The habit of coöperation promoted voluntary associations. We find one New England mill owned by seven shareholders, another by thirteen, and a third by fourteen. The towns in New England and New York made by-laws, and regulated their internal concerns in field and town meetings. The system was productive of no end of petty wrangling and neighborhood feuds, but it cultivated a democratic feeling and taught each man to maintain his right.

On the other hand, the Southern planter lived in some isolation, but his public interests were as extensive as his county or his province. This state of society begot self-reliance, and produced more leading statesmen than the other; but the people lacked the New England cohesion and susceptibility to organization, without which the statesmanship of the Revolution would have been vain. The Southerner, from his isolation and from other causes, became hospitable, eager for society, and in general spontaneously friendly and generous; the New England people became close-fisted and shrewd in trade; it is a trait of village life. But the benevolence of New England was more effective than that of the South, because it was organized and systematic. The village life of the extreme North trained the people to trade, and led to commercial development; and it made popular education possible. The sons of the great planters at the South were averse to commerce; they were also the most liberally educated and polished in manners of all the colonists; but the scattered common people could have no schools, and were generally rude and ignorant, even when compared with the lower class of New Englanders, who stood a chance of getting some rough schooling, besides a certain education from the meeting-house and the ever-recurring town debates.

## III.

## INHERITANCE.

THE leadership of the great families was sustained in New York and in the colonies south of Pennsylvania by primogeniture—the prerogative of the eldest son to inherit the landed estate in case the father left no will. Custom followed the law, and fathers who willed their property usually left the most or all of the land to the oldest son, as belonging to him by prescriptive right. This inequitable practice had its use in the warlike ages of feudalism, when the first son to grow up must take the father's place at the head of his troop of dependents; but in the American colonies it was only the result of that remarkable and often stupid bondage to tradition in which the Anglo-Saxon peoples contrive to exist and advance. To primogeniture the aristocratic colonies added the dead hand of entail, by which the land was sent down for generations in the line of the oldest male. Even a clumsy fiction, called in law "common recovery," by which the entail might be broken in England, was forbidden by statute in Virginia, and was not accounted applicable to the other colonies.

The pilgrims at Plymouth and the Massachusetts Puritans had belonged to that politico-religious party in England which sought the abolition of certain old abuses. As early as 1636 Plymouth enacted that land should be held after "the laudable custom, tenure, and hold of the manor of East Greenwich," that is, in an ancient Saxon way preserved at the coming of William the Conqueror by the county of Kent. One characteristic of this tenure was that it divided the lands equally among the sons in case there was no will. Massachusetts, which expressly abolished many of the worst features of feudal tenure, by name, gave to the oldest son a double portion according to the Mosaic code, but divided the rest among daughters as well as sons. This system prevailed throughout New England. Primogeniture had come to be esteemed a natural right, and the Massachusetts leaders felt obliged more than once to defend themselves from the charge of having "denied the right of the oldest son." Pennsylvania took the same middle course of sheltering innovation under the law of Moses by giving the oldest son a double portion. The laws of some of the colonies made the land liable, to a greater or less extent, with personal estate for the debts of the deceased—which robbed the oldest of a part of his "insolent prerogative"; but it was not until the shock of the Revolution that primogeniture and entail were swept away, under the leadership of Jefferson

and others. The oldest son's double portion in New England survived the Revolution for some years. A very ancient mode of inheritance prevailed in some English boroughs, called among lawyers "borough English." By this custom the lands descended to the youngest son. It found no lodgment in the laws of the colonies, so far as I know; but in New Hampshire it was a wide-spread custom to leave the homestead to the youngest, who remained at home and cared for the old age of his parents. This reasonable form of the custom of "ultimogeniture" lingers yet in certain parts of the country, as, for example, in some of the northern counties of New York.

## IV.

## THE TRADE IN WHITE BOND-SERVANTS.

THE ancient English tribes emerge from prehistoric obscurity holding slaves and serfs, probably the descendants of captives. In England serfdom was slowly worn out, partly by a political tendency to assert broadly the rights of Englishmen, and partly by a religious conviction, dating from the preaching of the Wyckliffites, that it was sinful to hold fellow-Christians in bondage. Queen Elizabeth appears to have yielded to this opinion, which prevailed widely in her reign; but with characteristic thrift she contrived to sell the privileges of freedom to those upon her manors whose blood was tainted by hereditary slavery, and James I. confirmed these or other copyhold tenures on the royal manors in consideration of another payment of money. Relics of the ancient villeinage, or bondage to the soil, lingered in a few places until after the Restoration.

The abolition of villeinage gave but a shadowy liberty to the lower classes. Long terms of service with wages fixed by authority took the place of the ancient serfdom. Any shrinking from his condition on the part of the poor man was repressed by rigorous laws. By a statute of the reign of Elizabeth, no tradesman might be hired for less than a year, and any artisan under thirty years of age, not at work, might be arbitrarily "retained" by any master-workman in his calling, nor could he depart until "the end of his term." Any unemployed man without rank or property might be similarly "retained" by any husbandman. No apprenticeship to a trade might expire until the apprentice was twenty-four years of age. It is probable that the labor of the servant was assignable during his "covenanted term of service," and during that term he was perhaps sold, bought, and beaten, as though

he were a slave. Certain it is that at the outset of American colonization in Virginia, and again in New England, one finds servants bound for long terms before leaving England, and treated as a recognized species of property.

The settlement of America quickened the stagnant labor market. The wilderness was hungry for men to till it, and a new trade in human beings sprang up. Indentured servants, poor children, vagrants, and other gutter sweepings of London were sent to America with men hard pressed by debt or other dire necessity. So insatiable was the colonial market for men that the trade was very lucrative from the start, and monstrous abuses sprung up. English writers in the middle of the seventeenth century express shame at finding their nation reproached by foreigners for this traffic in its own people. "These English," says a Dutch traveler, "are a villainous people, and would sell their own fathers for servants in the islands." Men of other nations were sometimes entrapped by English seamen and sold into the English West India islands, and prisoners captured by privateers in lawful war were run into lonesome places on the American coast and sold into bondage to increase the profit of the captors. The servants transported before 1650 were bound for long terms, some of them for ten years or more, many for seven or eight. After the restoration of the Stuarts, the opening of New York, the Carolinas, New Jersey, and then Pennsylvania, increased the demand for men, and the term of service was permanently reduced to four years.

English laborers bound themselves to serve a term of years, fairly hoping to better their condition in America; and men in domestic or other trouble would sell themselves for a term of service in the plantations, plunging into the abyss and trusting to luck to come up in better plight in a new world. Husbands forsaking their wives lost their identity in the transport ship, and wives fleeing from unbearable husbands were swallowed up in the same flood. Runaway children and apprentices were greedily welcomed by the crimps; felons and prison-breakers pursued by hue and cry were quickly safe on board. In those days of slow communication, renegades of every sort were as utterly lost to their old lives in America as they could have been had they migrated to the moon.

But this was not the worst feature of the trade. Men who were significantly called "spirits," and whose common trade had been that of "supplying soldiers to divers parts," turned their attention to the new trade in human flesh; and as the supply of the plantations with labor was considered a matter of the utmost importance, the nefarious business

of these knaves was long carried on with small interference from authority. Little lads were "inveigled and by lewd subtleties" enticed aboard and carried to the colonies to be heard of no more. Distressed parents followed the ships down the Thames sometimes, and paid a ransom to recover their children. So frightful was the evil that it excited dangerous tumults in London, which moved the Lord Mayor and Aldermen to address the Privy Council on the subject.

The boldness of the "spirits" is remarkable. The ship that kidnapped Peter Williamson, eight years old, lay fearlessly in port at Aberdeen a month after stowing him and other lads between decks. All of these were sold in Philadelphia at sixteen pounds the head. The Scotch Highlanders were carried off by a regular system of kidnapping. One hundred were captured in a single raid in 1739, but escaped on the coast of Ireland. Some gentlemen of Boston walked down to the Long Wharf one morning in 1730 to examine a company of Irish transports then offered for sale. Among the lads who were made to run up and down to show off their muscle and condition was one who had gone to sea with his uncle, a captain. The uncle dying, the mate and crew sold the boy to a passing transport ship, perhaps in order to secure the captain's property. The boy served out his time, and afterward became an officer in the later Indian wars. There were some cases as romantic as the story of Joseph and his brethren. James Annesley, son and heir of Lord Altham, when thirteen years old was decoyed on board a ship at Dublin, at the instigation of his uncle, and served out twelve years of rough bondage in Pennsylvania. Returning to Europe, he secured a verdict giving him his father's titles and estates, but he died before the case was finally decided on appeal in the House of Lords. There were other instances hardly less curious, and American servitude became a godsend to some of the romance-writers of the time.

Even when downright kidnapping — which was also a trait of the French colonial trade at the same period — had been pretty well done away with, the crimps were none the less active in seducing people into servitude by all sorts of devices. In the "Vicar of Wakefield" Goldsmith has left us a picture of one of these seductive villains whose business it was to persuade people into bondage. So vividly drawn is this account of "Mr. Crispe," the crimp, that one is tempted to believe that the unthrifty Goldsmith had been himself, when in some desperate strait, on the point of going to the plantations under indenture, perhaps with assurances, such as his hero

receives, that he might be employed as secretary to the embassy which the Synod of Pennsylvania was about to send to the Chickasaw Indians!

Bristol was the chief center of the colonial trade; here even the small traders and sometimes the peddlers had ventures in the colonies. Bristol, therefore, naturally took the lead in the servant trade, and most of the great officers of the city became involved in kidnapping. When, in Bristol, a man was on trial for some small crime, the petty officers of the court would persuade him to beg for transportation in order to avoid being hanged. These transports were then assigned to the mayor and each of the aldermen in turn, who sold them into the plantations and grew rich from the spoils of the poor and the desperate. In the most paradoxical scene in judicial history, the worst of judges, George Jeffreys, himself reeking with corruptions and cruelties incredible, is found arraigning the aldermen of this opulent city for their share in this trade. Ordering the scarlet-robed mayor from his seat on the bench to a place in the prisoner's dock, he cried, with brutal exultation: "See how the kidnapping rogue looks!" He ranted at the aldermen in words too vile to be reprinted. Yet the selling of condemned men and the condemning of men that they might be sold were practiced openly in the court of James II. at this very time. The ladies of the queen's bedchamber and the queen herself eagerly snatched at the profits from the sale of the rebels of Monmouth's rebellion, whom Jeffreys had just then condemned; even William Penn begged for twenty of them for the Philadelphia market.

Such being the spirit of the court, it is not surprising that the crimps resorted to means the most shameful. A man made drunk by design would awake to find himself at sea sailing to one of the plantations to be sold for four years to pay his passage-money, according to custom. This was called *trapping*. In vain were acts of Parliament passed for the registration of servants. Driven from one practice, the crimps resorted to new methods of entrapping the unwary, and the abuse lasted throughout the colonial period. The bellman of Cork advertised in a Philadelphia newspaper that he had authority from the mayor of his city to procure servants for America; the Irish mayor had perhaps learned from former mayors of Bristol the trick of turning a penny by selling small offenders out of the country. One shipmaster at Annapolis tried to pass a cargo of Irish vagrants and criminals for honest servants by the flimsy trick of showing sixty-six indentures, all signed by the mayor of Dub-

lin, and by fitting out twenty of them with new wigs, thus giving an air of gentility to his rogues.

To Philadelphia, in the later period, were brought great numbers of Germans, inveigled by artful agents to sell themselves through brokers at the Dutch ports. The agents managed to suppress such letters to Germany as would have exposed their misrepresentations, — a matter not difficult of accomplishment when the captains interested in the traffic were the irresponsible carriers of the correspondence. Many hardy Germans, having money enough to pay their fare, preferred to sell themselves for a term of years in order to learn the language and the ways of the country. Others paid half the fare and were sold for the remainder, and some paid the passage of the family by selling one or two of their surplus children into bondage during minority.

One reads in the Philadelphia papers, in 1729, of "choice maid-servants fit for town and country," to be had of a certain wine-cooper, and of "a parcel of likely servant-men and boys" for sale about the same time. The development of the back country produced the "soul-drivers," as they were contemptuously called — men who peddled servants in droves of fifty or more. It is said that a little Irishman in one of these gangs contrived to be the last on hand, and, by rising early one morning and representing himself as the master, sold the soul-driver and escaped.

To the voluntary transports or "free-willers," and the "kids" who had been "trapped" by "spirits" or seduced by the fair promises of crimps, were added convicts transported for crime. Like almost every other abuse of the colonial system, that of sending over the dissolute and criminal had begun in the reign of James I. The severity of English penal laws, by which sometimes "twenty were hanged up at a clap," occasioned evasions of all kinds; for Anglo-Saxon people prefer to reform an abuse by avoidance rather than by direct abolition. The old provision for "benefit of clergy" was stretched to an absurd comprehensiveness. The need for men in the colonies offered a new opportunity for merciful evasions of the death penalty in cases of minor felony. It became common to pardon thieves on condition of their accepting a seven years' term of service in the colonies, and the English State-Paper Office has many curious petitions for this commutation. As early as 1622 a horse-thief indicates that he much prefers service in Virginia to hanging. At a later period a husband is found petitioning on behalf of his wife, condemned



to death for stealing three-and-sixpence, that she might be transported to any plantation. After the Restoration it was enacted that justices, at their discretion, might send "loose and disorderly persons" to the colonies, and at intervals a hundred or so of "Newgate birds" were taken in a close lighter from Blackfriars to Woolwich, where they were put aboard ship for America. This stream of convicts brought no end of defilement to the infant plantations, which were poorly equipped to cope with rogues so sturdy and numerous as England was able to furnish. Laws made by colonial assemblies to obstruct such importations were repealed at home, but some of the colonies succeeded in turning the tide from their doors. The hardest words said against the mother country in colonial prints, a quarter of a century before the Revolution, sprang from the bitter resentment excited by this practice of forcing criminals on the plantations in spite of their utmost endeavor to keep them out. One of the most pungent newspaper writers of the time compared England to a father seeking to spread the plague among his children, or emptying filth upon their table; and Franklin proposed to send a present of rattlesnakes for the King's garden, as a fit return for the convicts out of English jails.

## V.

## THE TREATMENT OF BOND-SERVANTS.

THE number of bond-servants, even in New England, seems to have been large, and the supply was much greater in the wheat and tobacco countries. Every kind of business in Pennsylvania depended upon the labor of indentured servants, and there were great commotions when, in 1740, the reluctance of the Quaker Government to raise or pay troops was met by the enlistment of bond-servants. In 1670 Virginia had six thousand English servants, while there were yet but two thousand negroes. As the servants were freed in four years, this number represented a very large importation. In 1683 it was impossible to buy a large tobacco crop unless the merchant had servants to exchange.

The treatment of servants was as various as the character of the masters. At first, while the country was new and the population sparse, there was a sort of good-fellowship between the faithful servant and his master's family, and there were not wanting those who granted many indulgences to their bondmen. But even in 1629 De Vries, the Dutch traveler, saw English men and women staked and lost at cards, and he bluntly told the Virginians

that he had "never seen such work in Turk or Barbarian." And when there had been brought over a multitude of "kids," as they were called, the decline in the average character of the servants and the incoming of negro slaves rendered the bondman's lot less tolerable, especially when the cultivation of a staple brought into requisition large gangs of convicts and other transports of desperate fortunes and reckless temper. It was an age of flogging; criminals, soldiers, sailors, pupils, children, and now and then even wives, were thought the better for scourging. One ought hardly to be surprised, therefore, at the numerous and cruel whippings of English servants, women as well as men, who were scourged naked with hickory rods and washed with brine; the punishment continuing sometimes at intervals for hours, or being renewed day after day. There were also in use, by masters and overseers, thumb-screws, sweatings, and other such devil's devices. The food allowed was sometimes a scant diet of Indian meal. The sick servant was neglected lest the doctor's charge should exceed the value of his remaining service; and one thrifty master required a servant, sick of a mortal disease, to dig his own grave in advance, in order to save the other men's time. In 1705 Virginia prohibited the secret burial of servants, and the whipping of "Christian white servants" naked, without the consent of a justice; and in 1715 Maryland made several protective provisions, one forbidding the giving of more than ten lashes for one offense, unless with approval of a magistrate. In New England, where servants were often regarded as Christian brethren and where settlements were more dense, care could be and was exercised to prevent injustice and cruelty; but there were instances of brutal hardship, notwithstanding, and even of a servant's dying from a master's cruelty. It was said that in Maryland the African slave sometimes fared better than the white servant—the slave being absolute property, while, as regarded the white servant, it was often only a question of how much profit an unfeeling master might wring out of him before the expiration of his term. On the other hand, there were not wanting many instances of fairness and even generosity. In one curious case a magnanimous Maryland master was rewarded by presents from the servant, who rose to great wealth on his return to England, but whose name and identity remained undiscovered to those who had befriended him as a bondman.

Great numbers fled away from the sharpness of bondage, taking the risk of cruel punishments and an extension of their terms if taken. During the existence of New Netherland, Dutch servants broke away to New Eng-



COLONIAL MANSION. RESIDENCE OF THE LATE WILLIAM BULL PRINGLE, ESQ., CHARLESTON, S. C.

land or Maryland, while English servants from both directions made their way to the Dutch territory. With New England the Dutch had at one time a treaty for the return of those "who carried their passports under their feet." To get away on shipboard, to seize a shallop and make off to a neighboring colony, and represent themselves as shipwrecked mariners, and to fly to the Indians, were favorite devices of runaways. So great was the number of fugitives that "inferior persons" were always liable to arrest on suspicion. The newspapers after 1725 have many descriptions of runaways, with offers of reward for their arrest. In 1663 a dangerous conspiracy of indentured servants was discovered in Virginia, and a general fear of the class, among whom were many desperate characters, probably prompted much of the severe treatment inflicted on bondmen.

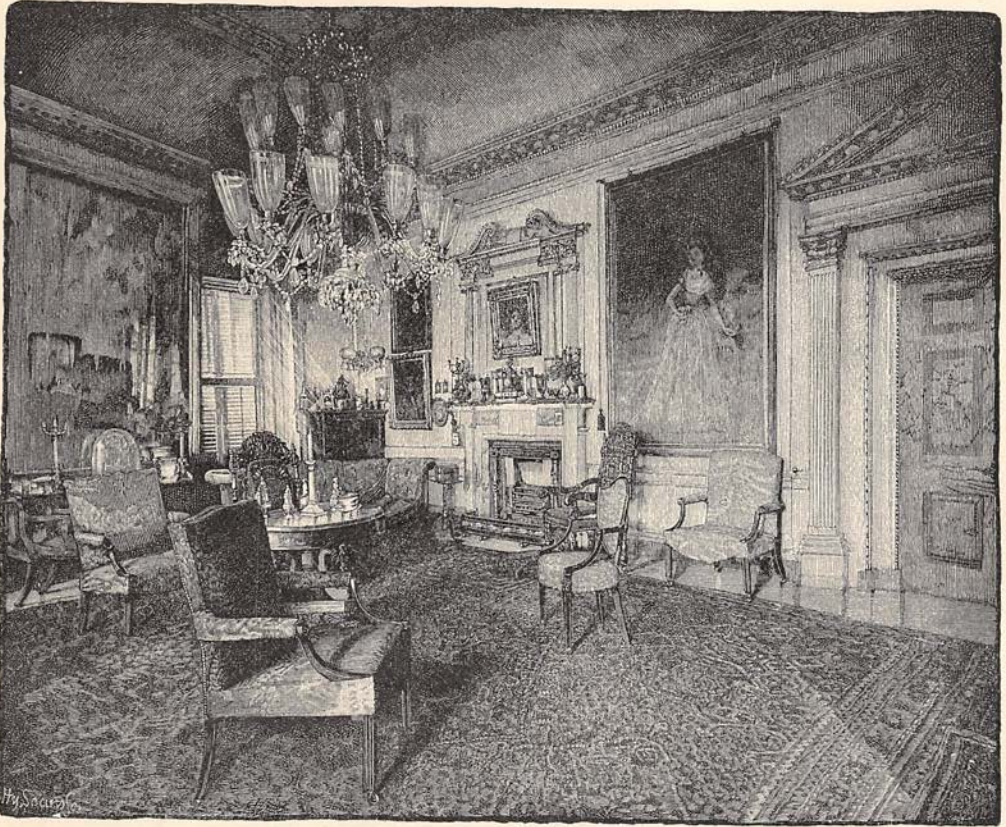
It was perceived from the beginning that the criminal and semi-criminal elements in the servile class were a source of moral corruption. The pilgrims found that servants led astray "the unstaed and young." The Massachusetts colonists before starting essayed at considerable cost to sift their servants, ex-

cluding a corrupt element; they even sent back two boys who had shown vicious propensities on shipboard. But the large proportion of penalties meted out to servants during the first years of the colonies shows how slight was the effect of the sifting process. Even in the colonies where the convict element was shut out, many of the servants were obtained from dangerous classes, such as "sturdy beggars, gypsies, and other incorrigible rogues, idle and debauched persons." They could "eat till they sweat and work till they freeze," in the quaint words of a traveler in New England. It was probably from those who had been servants that the sea-rovers fitting out in the colonies found recruits. The pirate James, when short of hands, lay off the Virginia coast and captured transport ships, many of the convicts and servants in them preferring to risk a halter in cruising "on the grand account" to pining in colonial bondage. In some instances the criminal transports rose and slaughtered the crew, taking the ship into some out-of-the-way harbor and escaping. The degradation of the women-servants was a continual source of evil; laws were made to correct their immoralities, and other laws to

prevent these "Christians" from intermarrying with the heathen Africans.

Many indentured servants were of excellent character, and some of them had a fortunate destiny. Kirkbride, bond-servant to William Penn, became a preacher in the Society of Friends, a magistrate, and a member of the Assembly. Zenger, the

class of free laborers and small farmers, or into that migrant caste which has formed a sort of selva-ge to civilization, pushing its rude cabins further and further over the dangerous frontier in order to avoid contact with the more orderly and less congenial life that presses upon it from behind. There was besides a quite insoluble residuum, the irre-



COLONIAL DRAWING-ROOM AND FURNITURE, IN THE BULL PRINGLE MANSION.

famous New York printer, was one of the "poor Palatines" brought over at royal expense and indentured. Women are proportionately scarce in a new country, and many bondmaids were married to those who had purchased them from the ships or dealers. A niece of Daniel Defoe, who came to Maryland as a "redemptor," married the son of her master. Many servants became overseers, and these were probably ancestors of the well-defined overseer class in the South. In all the colonies there were those brought as servants who rose to wealth through industry and frugality, two virtues on which a new land pays high premium. Some servants founded families that attained to honor and influence. The larger part of those sold into the colonies, no doubt, fell into the

retrievable dregs of the servile class, whose descendants are to be found, no doubt, among the "crackers" and "poor white trash" in the South, and among the hereditarily criminal and pauper families of certain regions in the Northern States.

#### VI.

#### AFRICAN SLAVERY.

IN 1619 a "Holland man-of-war," short of water and food, put into the James River and cast anchor before the only English settlement on this side of the globe. The captain was forbidden to land, but as he threatened to throw overboard some slaves captured in the West Indies, Captain Ken-

dall, commanding at Jamestown, exchanged some "presents" for them. These fourteen "negars" were the first slaves in English America. The opening of new settlements and the lighting upon new staple products produced a demand for unskilled labor which the English "spirits" and crimps could not adequately supply. Negroes were therefore brought from the West Indies, and afterward direct from Africa or Madagascar. The labor of slaves increased the ability of the colonies to "take off" English goods, and the products of slave labor swelled the customs revenue and the profits of the merchant. Colonies were accounted of no other use than to enrich their metropolis, and it is therefore not surprising that a Committee on Foreign Plantations, soon after the Restoration, declared that "black slaves were the most useful appurtenances of a plantation."

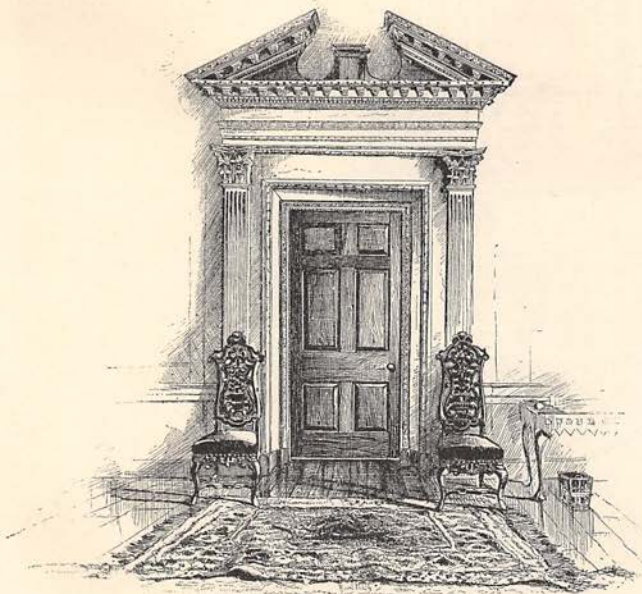
The English serfs had received their freedom chiefly on theological grounds as fellow-Christians, with some additional weight thrown into the scale by their being fellow-Englishmen. But free-born Englishmen were by custom sold into severe bondage for long terms, and even sent beyond seas in large numbers; there could, therefore, be no repugnance in the minds of the colonists to the enslavement of blacks, who were not only pagans, but so different in appearance as to seem to be another species, not entitled to human consideration. At least, if they came



A COLONIAL STAIRCASE IN THE BULL PRINGLE MANSION.

from Adam, they were by some theological experts identified with the cursed descendants of Cain; for Ham was thought to have found a wife in the land of Nod.

Slavery is more ancient than historic records. In the centuries of warfare between Christians and Mohammedans, the practice of enslaving captives outlawed by their "infidelity" had prevailed. Negroes were easily confounded with the Moors, and thousands of blacks were annually brought into Europe for sale as early as the middle of the fifteenth century; and a century later, in 1553, one finds four-and-twenty of them brought as far as England. From Spain first, and then directly from Africa, black slaves had been carried to the Spanish colonies to develop the mines. The Royal African Company of England announced to Charles II., in 1663, that the very existence of the plantations depended on an adequate supply of negro servants; and though their

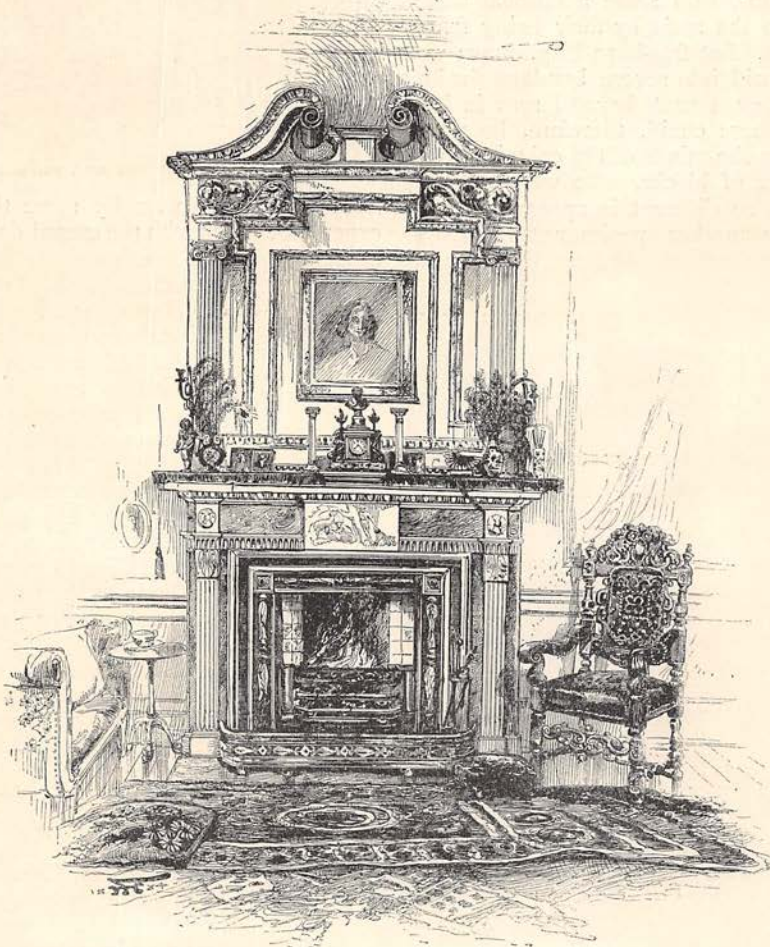


CARVED DOORWAY, DRAWING-ROOM OF BULL PRINGLE MANSION.

declaration was due to cupidity, it was at least true that all rich and successful American colonies up to that time had possessed slaves. So late as 1735 the Lords Commissioners of Trade declared that the colonies "could not possibly subsist" without an adequate supply of slaves. Indeed, the first effect of the introduction of slaves was a rapid advancement in subduing forests and opening sources of wealth.

Negro slavery, therefore, entered the colonies without any law in its favor except the common consent and practice of Christian nations. For sixty years after its beginning here, there seems to have been no scruple or question about it. The life-long bondage of negroes was tacitly justified by their heathen condition. When, in 1677, the question was first raised in an English court, Africans were held to be slaves by the custom of merchants and "as being infidels." This notion was so general that very many planters resisted

efforts to instruct their slaves in the Christian religion, lest baptism should emancipate them. To remove this obstacle the Virginia Assembly enacted, in 1667, that the conversion of a slave should not invalidate the owner's claim to his services, and similar laws were afterward passed in most of the other provinces. But these laws were merely of colonial authority, and were not sufficient to overcome the scruple of covetousness. A proposal from England to encourage the conversion of the negroes "would not go down" with the New York Assembly in 1699. Solemn assurances that one Christian might lawfully retain another in slavery were given in an address issued *ex cathedra* by Dr. Gibson, Bishop of London, in 1727; and the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General found it prudent to announce in 1729 that neither taking a slave to Europe nor baptizing him anywhere could make him free.



FIRE-PLACE AND CHIMNEY-PIECE IN THE BULL PRINGLE MANSION.

After the beginning of the eighteenth century the colonists began to feel keenly two of the evils of slavery: it stimulated over-production, and it kept the white people in constant danger from insurrection. They

tween a kindly master and a faithful slave, which did much to ameliorate the system at last, were rendered quite impossible while the negroes were untamed barbarians, representing in their features and speech the vari-



AN OLD MARYLAND MANOR-HOUSE.

therefore sought to check the importation of negroes, but found that they had begun too late. The companies which from time to time engrossed a great part of the profit of the slave-trade exerted an immense and, it is said, a corrupt influence over the home government. Bristol merchants were very importunate against the South Carolina duty on slaves. Laws enacted in America to obstruct the slave-trade were usually disallowed by the Crown, and royal governors were informed that the colonists could not be permitted to "discourage a traffic so beneficial to the nation." This refusal to allow the colonists to repel slave-ships was one of those impolitic exercises of imperial authority which tended to estrange the plantations; it was, in fact, made one of the minor counts in the bitter quarrel which brought about the final separation.

#### VII.

#### SLAVE-LIFE IN THE COLONIES.

FOR a long time after the introduction of slaves they were almost all foreign-born and savage-born, so that those attachments be-  
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ous tribes of the African mainland and Madagascar. The relation between the two races was, for the most part, one of hardly suppressed hostility. Many who came of slave lineage in Africa were submissive—their backs were bent to the burden of their inheritance; others, who had been kidnapped or captured in recent wars, and especially those who had been of consequence in their tribes, were difficult and defiant, scorning a tame obedience, and proudly contemning toil. For a long time but few women were brought, and the slaves lived together in gangs, with no softening influence of family ties, but in brutal irregularity and vice. Their holiday amusements were savage dances accompanied by beating of drums and blowing of horns; and their funeral ceremonies were, in the eyes of their masters, grotesque mummeries. They were believed to possess many secret poisons,—potent, but tardy in their operations,—and to produce by them long-lingering and mysterious sicknesses, which resulted at last in the death of master or mistress or of some fellow-slave who had incurred the animosity of the poisoners. To this terror of poison was added a dread of the sorceries of the pagans, who were

naturally supposed to have familiar relations with the powers of evil. Such fears of assassination, sorcery, and insurrection aggravated the harshness with which the colonists treated the horde of black servants, whose speech and character were alike incomprehensible. That they were of a savage and ungovernable nature and without any sense of shame was the excuse assigned for the sternness, not to say ferocity, of some of the colonial laws. That they had no fear of punishment in a future life was also urged in the preamble of many acts whose rigor was calculated to make perdition

penalty was not accounted terrible enough for serious offenses. Travelers by night through the forest were sometimes startled by the swinging to and fro of the body of a negro who had been hanged alive in chains for killing his master. Such an offense in Maryland was treated as treason and punished with good old English elaboration of details. The right hand was amputated, then the criminal was hanged, then the head was cut off, the body quartered, and the quarters suspended in the most public places. In some of the provinces a special court of one or two

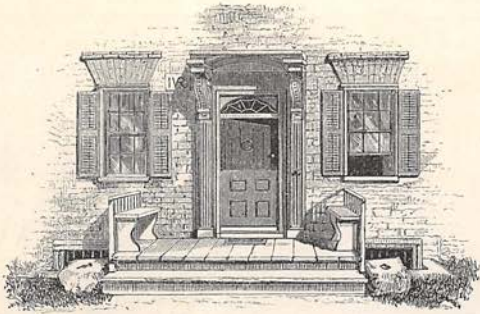


AN OLD NEW YORK MANSION. ANCIENT VAN RENSSELAER MANOR-HOUSE AT GREENBUSH, NEW YORK.

conceivable to the imagination of the darkest pagan. But a part of the severity of the statutes against slaves must be attributed to the general harshness of English legislation in that day, especially such legislation as had to do with the lower classes. Partly also it was due to that almost universal default of humane feeling which makes the first half of the eighteenth century seem so remote from our time. It is rare that the colonial laws propose anything less than death for a slave's offense. Even petty larceny, the tendency to which is a characteristic of the plantation negro as permanent as the color of his skin, by the South Carolina law was visited with death for the fourth offense. The simple death

magistrates, with two or more freeholders, was authorized to inflict death for certain offenses by slaves "in such a manner and with such circumstances as the aggravation and enormity of their crimes shall merit." The pen shrinks from recording the penalties inflicted by these courts; burning alive and a lingering death by hanging in chains were not the most cruel of them. The people were better than these laws begotten of terror; and in South Carolina many constables and other officers flatly refused to execute the punishments, so that to penal laws against the slaves it was needful to add penalties for the humanity of the officers.

There were some offenses not accounted



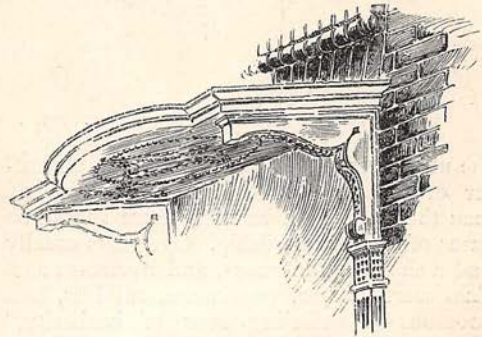
DOORWAY IN THE VAN RENSSELAER HOUSE AT GREENBUSH, N. Y.

death-worthy. For any resistance to a white person, without regard to extenuating circumstances, Virginia punished the slave with thirty lashes; Maryland cropped one of his ears; while in South Carolina he might suffer more severely. Hamstringing, branding in the face, and slitting the nose were among the methods in use for the subjugation of a heathen. In more than one colony slaves running about at night or "lying out" might suffer a more cruel and degrading mutilation.

That the law did not, in execution, lose much of the severity of its letter is shown by the complaint in 1714, that the treasury of South Carolina "had been very much exhausted" by extraordinary sums paid to compensate masters for slaves that had been executed. And yet society in this province was more urbane than in any other. In colonies where the statutes did not warrant extraordinary penalties on slaves, the administration of law went to the limit of severity. In Massachusetts hanging was the worst penalty for murder, but the obsolete common-law punishment specially assigned to women who were guilty of petty treason was revived in 1755, in order to burn alive a slave-woman who had killed her master in Cambridge; earlier still the old *lex talionis* had been put in force, that a negro woman might die by fire in Boston for arson causing death. In New Jersey, even in that part of the province in which Quakerism should have softened the spirit of the people, negroes were burned in many instances. New York, without the excuse of serious danger,—for her negroes were not more than a sixth of

the population,—had a code barely less fierce than that of South Carolina, where the multitude of the slaves was a perpetual danger to the whites. Some of the revolting penalties inflicted on slaves in New York with the sanction of law-courts are striking proofs of the small advance the men of that time had made from positive barbarism.

The tendency of race-pride, wide religious difference, and the condition of perpetual bondage was to dehumanize the negro in the white man's thought. The slave-ships tossed dead negroes like brutes into James River, and their floating carcasses became offensive to dwellers on the banks. In many places black servants went about the house but half clad, and negro children of twelve or fifteen were seen waiting at table "without even a fig-leaf." Slaves were sometimes marked or branded like cattle; and a theory was very current that the African was a sort of sub-human species, possessing no soul. The laws



OVER THE DOORWAY, VAN RENSSELAER HOUSE.

sought to strip him of human attributes: the slave might not, even with the master's consent, own boats, canoes, or cattle; he might not learn to write; he could not be freed without license; and one colonial law forbade a master to dress a servant in fine clothes. In South Carolina manslaughter of a slave was not punishable; in Virginia "death under correction," if not proven to be willful killing, did not entail punishment. In South Carolina, after 1712, the cold-blooded murderer who, "of wantonness or only of bloody-mindedness or cruel intention," slew a negro was obliged to pay a fine of fifty pounds. Such was the law, but public policy generally prevented any punishment of a master for the death of a slave; even in Pennsylvania, where the slaves were hardly a fortieth of the entire population, a master who had murdered his negro was allowed to escape from the province by the connivance of the magistrates.

The treatment which slaves received ranged all the way from the utmost indulgence to



ONE OF THE LOOP-HOLES, VAN RENSSELAER HOUSE.





THE PEABODY MANSION, DANVERS, MASS. BUILT, ABOUT 1754, BY "KING" HOOPER, OF MARBLEHEAD.

the utmost cruelty, according to the character of the master. It is in the nature of man that in such a relation there should be cases of extreme hardship. Overseers usually had a share in the crops, and overseers as a class were coarse, passionate, ruthless, and covetous—"unfeeling sons of barbarity," a writer of that time styles them. Eighty of Spotswood's negroes perished from cruelty and neglect during his absence in England. It is probable that under the utmost pressure a negro could rarely be brought to do as much work as an energetic white man. But the hours of slave labor covered the whole period of daylight; corn-husking and rice-beating were often before daylight and after dark. There were laws forbidding masters to exact more than fourteen or fifteen hours in winter, and more than fifteen or sixteen in summer. A peck of corn-meal a week, often ground by their own hands after the day's task was done, was the usual allowance. Humane masters, and those with fewer slaves, added sometimes a little meat, and sometimes skimmed milk. Their beds were benches or boards. It would be wrong, however, to insist on their fare or their lodging as peculiar hardships; slave fare and lodging were better and more regular than the food and dwellings of the poorer classes in Europe. Whitefield avers that for trifling offenses slaves were sometimes cut with knives or had forks thrust into

them, and the restraining statutes of the later colonial time tell the same story. Scalding and cruelly mutilating were forbidden in South Carolina, and the laws recognized the half-starved condition of some slaves as an extenuation of the crime of breaking into granaries for food. Georgia specifically forbids the cutting out of the tongue, the putting out of an eye, and other mutilation of slaves. But these punishments represented the extreme of cruelty exercised only by the brutally depraved. Compared with the condition of slaves in the sugar islands, the negroes in the continental colonies were in a state that might almost be called comfortable, and there were plantation owners, even in that time, who showed no little humanity.

All other doors of hope for betterment of condition having been closed, many negroes ran away. Sturdy fugitives, lying out in secret places, carried on a bold system of plunder, subsisting sometimes for years on the crops and hogs of the planters. One "Billy" was the terror of three Virginia counties in 1701, and is immortalized by a special statute of outlawry. In New England, as well as at the South, the Indians were the most effective restraint upon fugitive slaves. Finding himself pursued by Indians, the runaway negro would turn about in despair and deliver himself to the tender mercies of the overseer, knowing how exquisite were the tortures

which the Indians liked to inflict on a black, — “being allowed so to do by the Christians,” says one traveler. It was deemed impolitic to drive off the Carolina Indians, lest the woods should be filled with fugitive negroes, who, from their relations with the slaves, would prove a far more dangerous foe. In spite of white men and Indians, there were adventur-

sought to send these last back to Virginia. New York slaves ran away to the French in Canada, and South Carolina negroes, abetted by the Spaniards, got into Florida in such numbers that they were formed into a regiment. Slaves found north of Saratoga were to suffer death; those seen south of the Altamaha were likewise to be taken, dead or alive.



THE FAIRBANKS HOUSE, DEDHAM, MASS. BUILT BY JONATHAN FAIRBANKS, IN 1636.

ous negroes who got away into the “backwoods” of Maryland, into the Great Dismal Swamp of Virginia, and the “Great Alligator Dismal Swamp” of North Carolina. In the somber recesses of these swamps, usually accounted impenetrable by white people, they lived on corn, hogs, and fowls, which they raised on spots not covered by water. During the Revolution two travelers through North Carolina found their way barred by fourteen naked negroes, armed with poles, and intent on robbery. In some instances runaways from Virginia were kept in a sort of peonage by North Carolina borderers, who settled them on secluded parts of their land, and exacted from them a heavy tribute as the price of this shadow of liberty. Others got clean across the mountains; in 1721 the Indians were be-

#### VIII.

#### NEGRO INSURRECTIONS.

So LONG as the greater part of the slaves were foreign, and some of them free-born, strange to the speech and customs of the country, and under the ban of religion, the attitude of perpetual siege was inevitable in those colonies where there were many negroes. The rigorous laws we have cited are not for servants, but for foes. Fontaine, of Virginia, styles the slaves “our intestine enemies,” and Milligan regarded the South Carolina negroes as “necessary but very dangerous domestics.” Slaves had many ways of carrying on a concealed warfare, as by stealing boats, or setting fire to tar-kilns, stacks of rice or corn, and

other valuable products of labor. Some warlike slaves, remembering perhaps the arts of Africa, made weapons that appear on the statute-books as "wooden swords."

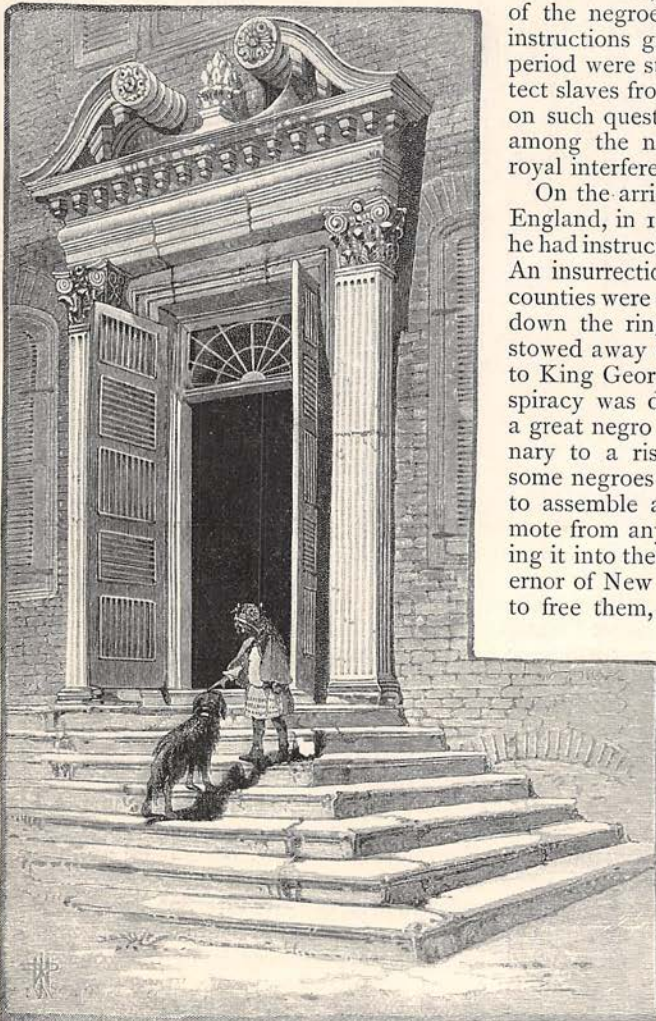
An account of all the insurrections of negroes would be a dreary accumulation of horrors. Of some of them, indeed, but the slightest mention has come down to us; and there were, no doubt, others that have left no trace on the records. The one in New York City, in 1712, is perhaps a typical one. Some slaves of the Carmantee and Pappa tribes, having suffered ill-usage, took a blind and savage vengeance by setting fire to a building in the middle of the night, and then attacking with guns and knives the crowd that gathered about the conflagration. At the approach of soldiers from the fort they fled to the woods; the next day the whole island was "driven," in order

to hunt them out. Six of them killed themselves, and eighteen or more were executed. Some of these were hanged, some were burned at the stake, one was broken on the wheel, and one was hanged alive in chains and left to die a lingering death of torment in the very streets of the town. The people of the little capital were long in recovering from the terror excited by these scenes. It, no doubt, contributed to the wild panic of 1741.

The years between 1730 and 1740, and a little later, constitute a period in which insurrections and fears of insurrections were rife in widely separated English colonies. Perhaps the new interest in the religious condition of the blacks, and the discussions awakened by the letters of the Bishop of London; and the deliverances of the Attorney-General and the Solicitor-General on the legal status of converted slaves, had filled the befogged minds of the negroes with groundless hopes. The instructions given to royal governors at this period were strongly in favor of laws to protect slaves from inhumanity, and the debates on such questions could not but set a-going among the negroes exaggerated rumors of royal interference in their behalf.

On the arrival of Colonel Spotswood from England, in 1730, a report got a-going that he had instructions to free all baptized negroes. An insurrection took place in July, and five counties were under arms at one time hunting down the ringleaders. One slave was found stowed away on a ship going as ambassador to King George. In the next month a conspiracy was detected in South Carolina, and a great negro dance near Charleston, preliminary to a rising, was broken up. In 1734 some negroes in New Jersey, who were wont to assemble at night at a negro quarter remote from any dwellings of white people, taking it into their heads to believe that the Governor of New York had the King's command to free them, conspired to rise at night, kill

the white men, seize horses, and get away to the Indians. Two years later an insurrection in the English island of Antigua was suppressed with the execution of sixty negroes by the most barbarous methods known to civilized ingenuity. In September, 1739, occurred an insurrection in South Carolina, the memory of which still lingers in local tradition as the "Gullah War," so called from the tribal name of the negroes engaged in it. Breaking open a ware-



DOORWAY OF COL. WILLIAM BYRD'S HOUSE AT WESTOVER, VA.

house and seizing arms, the Gullahs marched southward, putting to death in barbarous ways twenty-three white people and burning all the houses in their way. They perhaps intended to push through to Florida, but a congregation of white people attending the Wiltown church received warning of the outbreak. The men, who had all brought their arms to the place of worship, as required by law, left the terrified women huddled in the church, and marched against the negroes. These had stopped to dance in half-drunken triumph in an open field, so little were they fitted to conduct any military movement. An encounter took place on a plantation still known as "The Battlefield." All but two or three of the negroes were killed in the fight or executed afterward.

The very incapacity of the blacks to appreciate military considerations—to distinguish the possible from the impossible—added to the danger and to the fears of the whites. The military superiority of the masters afforded small protection to isolated families, who were never quite safe from a rising of some small party of infatuated and perhaps fanatical slaves.

This will in part explain the New York panic of 1741. It chanced in this year that the buildings inside the fort, at the southernmost cape of New York island, were burned. The fire was traced to the carelessness of a plumber. Other fires occurred soon after: two of them visibly caught from burning chimneys; one was caused by the carelessness of a smoker; others were probably of incendiary origin. The quick succession of these fires alarmed susceptible people. One militia officer got the nickname of "Major Drum," by beating an alarm on the occasion of a fire. But when yet other fires occurred, Major Drum's terror became contagious; the people probably recalled the massacre in their own streets in 1712, and the recent insurrections in Virginia, Antigua, New Jersey, and South Carolina, with the fresh disasters of Jamaica in the war with the Maroons or runaway negroes. The public sensitiveness was increased by a fear of the Spaniards, who were at war with the English, and by the old unreasoning religious belief in impossible papist plots, cherished by all good Englishmen after the revolution of 1688. The incoherent mutterings of a negro named Quack, who, when he saw a building afire, said, "Burn, burn, scorch, scorch," with other words as much to the point, kindled a flame of suspicion. It was believed that certain "Spanish negroes," who claimed to have been freemen until taken prisoners and sold as slaves in New York, were in secret league with the enemy, and that

many of the slaves were in the plot. The jail-rooms were soon crowded with suspected negroes, and citizens were fleeing from the doomed town in such numbers that carts could not be found to remove their household goods. When a reward of a hundred pounds had been offered for information, an ignorant girl, a bought servant of a keeper of a drinking-house that was a resort for disreputable people and a place of deposit for stolen goods, swore to a plot of negroes and low white people to burn the town. Certain of the accused negroes were forthwith condemned to be burned. Some of these protested their innocence to the last; some, stimulated by promises of pardon, made confessions implicating others. In the white heat of fright and rage to which public feeling had now been wrought, no tale seemed too incredible for belief; even the judges were not staggered by any improbability or contradiction. All the lawyers in the town joined the prosecution, leaving the execrated blacks without counsel. A whole summer was spent in one-sided trials, in burnings, and in hangings. Thirteen blacks perished at the stake, eighteen were hanged, and seventy were transported. Three disreputable white people were executed. One Ury, a school-master, who was also a non-juring clergyman, was transformed by the excited imaginations of the people into a Jesuit and a Spanish emissary, and was condemned and hanged upon the self-contradictory testimony of a girl ignorant and vile. But the death of Ury awakened sympathy, and people were by this time found who were cool enough and bold enough to stem the tide. The reprobate witnesses had begun to fly at higher game, and now included people of good standing in their ever-expanding tale of conspiracy. The tide ran out as fast as it had come in, and as the town regained its wits the very existence of any plot was doubted. The fanatic judge, Horsemanden, whose narrow and credulous intellect had been the source of much of the mischief, published a stout volume containing much of the evidence, the arguments, and the judicial rant of the trials,—a perpetual monument to his memory.

## IX.

## AMELIORATIONS OF SLAVERY.

THOSE European travelers in the colonies who were most averse to slavery express astonishment at the cheerfulness of the "poor but unhappy wretches" who, with but eight hours or less for supper and sleep, would yet drag their tired bodies six or seven miles across



AN OLD VIRGINIA MANSION. INTERIOR OF THE CARY HOUSE, NEAR RICHMOND.

country to spend the night in dancing to the thrumming of a banjo or the beating of a quaqua. Whitefield, complaining of the cruelties inflicted on slaves, gives, unconsciously, another view of the matter, by lamenting in the same breath that the negroes spend their Sundays in "piping and dancing." Now and then a high-spirited African was found to whom bondage was worse than death; such was Cato, the slave of the noted minister, Dr. Stephen Williams, of Longmeadow in Massachusetts, who bore many severe scourgings for his repeated disobediences, and finally drowned himself in a well. But a happy insensibility, a forgetfulness of yesterday and a recklessness of to-morrow, with a temper inclined to jollity, often enabled the negro to get more merriment out of life than his master.

When the number of slave-women came to

hold some proportion to the number of the men, the negro became domesticated. Negro children born in America spoke English, and, with the quick imitativeness of their race, affected the manners of those above them. There came to be a semblance of marriage and something like family life; the old savage concourses, with drum-beatings and horn-blowings, and the pagan rites over the dead, were presently forgotten. Many of the new race had been playmates in childhood with their owners, and there were black nurses who were looked upon with filial affection, and venerable "uncles" among the old men whose native wisdom was respected by white and black. Thus the relations between the races by degrees took on a more human character.

In communities with English traditions the wide gap between a higher and a lower race was not likely to be bridged, as it has been in other lands, by a legitimate intermixture of blood. In Maryland there was an early tendency of lower-class whites to intermarry with the negroes, and Peter Fontaine expresses dislike of actual marriages

with quadroons in Virginia; but English race-  
pride caused such unions to be detested and forbidden by law. Of hybrids there were enough, but since they were under the ban of a double illegitimacy, and without recognition by the white father, they fell into the slave class of the mother, and did not in any way serve, as half-caste people elsewhere have done, to modify the antagonism of the races.

Philanthropic exertion for the negro was at first wholly religious, seeking his conversion not so much for the good of the negro as for the glory of Christianity. The attention of James II. having been called to the pagan condition of the negroes, he resolved at the council board, in 1685, that all the slaves in the plantations should be christened; the thought of baptizing them in a mass, by royal order, whether they would or no, was no doubt doubly pleasing to

him as a zealot and as a lover of arbitrary methods. Efforts to convert the slaves in the seventeenth century were few and languid, the most notable being those of the superannuated Eliot, in Massachusetts. There were a few individuals who, like William Penn in 1700, had "a concern for the souls of the blacks"; but many held them to be quite without souls, and hence not proper objects of concern. In 1704 Elias Neau, a French Protestant, began to act as catechist for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, his work lying among the fourteen hundred negroes in New York city. In this field he labored eighteen years, under all sorts of discouragement, and even with peril to his life during the excitement which followed the massacre of 1712. About 1728 and afterward there seems to have been a movement, widely diffused, but rather feeble, for teaching the slaves the rudiments of Christian doctrine. This agitation had its main impulse from England. Ten thousand copies of an address of the Bishop of London on the subject were circulated. Certain South Carolina ladies and some South Carolina clergymen made diligent, and to some degree successful, efforts to Christianize their slaves. About 1743 a school for negroes was founded in Charleston under the auspices of Commissary Gardon; while in Maryland the negroes appear to have been sometimes taught in company with white children in the parish charity schools. As early as 1728 there was a negro school for teaching "reading, catechising, and writing" in Boston, and at the same period the ministers sometimes preached special sermons to the blacks.

But more than a repetition of creed and catechism, or an exposition of doctrine, was needed to interest the tropical nature of the African. In the general quickening of the conscience and religious affections that came from the revival led by Whitefield and Edwards toward the middle of the century, the zeal of religious people extended to the pagan Indians and negroes, and many of the Africans in turn were touched by a form of religion that appealed to their mercurial affections. Davies, the Presbyterian apostle of the "New Light" revival in Virginia, exults, in 1756, that he "had the pleasure of seeing the table of the Lord adorned with forty-four black faces." He taught negroes to read in Sunday-schools a quarter of a century before the experiment of Robert Raikes in England. But it was left for the more democratic and enthusiastic sects which had their rise as the colonial period drew to a close, especially for the Baptists and Methodists, to bring the plantation negroes to such religion as they were capable of—a religion of ecstasies and

plaintive songs, of visions and childlike anticipations.

Compassion for any object cannot well be exercised piecemeal. Efforts for the conversion of the slaves brought them at length within the radius of the white man's sympathies. The religious movement, the growth of home-bred slaves, and the increase of humanity and refinement among the colonists, combined to ameliorate the treatment of the negroes. The statute-books began to look less grim. As early as 1722, soon after a conspiracy of the negroes, the South Carolina code was softened a very little. And it is to the credit of that province that, in the excitement which followed the insurrection of 1739, the legislation was not, as was to be expected in a time of passion, wholly adverse to the negroes. Wise law-makers set themselves to correct abuses that tended to provoke such outbreaks. The New York laws, which refused a slave trial by an ordinary court, were in the later age often allowed to lie dormant; the Georgia acts of 1755 contain many humane restrictions upon the master.

But the revolutionary movement did most to better the legal standing of the negro. In Virginia, at this period, the more barbarous punishments of slaves were abolished, and the extraordinary discriminations of the law against free negroes and Indians were removed; while in Massachusetts, where the money interest at stake in slavery was comparatively small, the system began to break down in the new enthusiasm for liberty.

## X.

## ANTISLAVERY MOVEMENTS.

DIRECT movements against slavery before the Revolution were found only in the Society of Friends and among the New England Puritans. The first voice in America to speak against the perpetual bondage of man to man was heard in a memorial of some Friends of Germantown in Pennsylvania. This protest, in vigorous broken English, was addressed to the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting in 1688, and it opened an agitation which resulted, seventy years later, in bringing the Philadelphia Quakers to a conclusion opposed to slave-holding. During all this period the richer Friends held slaves, and several obscure and now almost forgotten preachers were censured or disowned for their "testimony" on this subject. There came one, however, who was no more to be silenced than a Hebrew prophet. Benjamin Lay was born a Quaker, but was disowned for his eccentricities. He had been compelled to leave Barbadoes for his protest

**TO BE SOLD** by **William Yeomans, (in Charles Town Merchant,) a parcel of good Plantation Slaves. Encouragement will be given by selling Rice in Payment, or any**



*large saddles and Furniture, choice Barbados and Boston Rum, also Cordial Waters and Limejuice, as well as a parcel of extraordinary Indian trading Goods, and many of other sorts suitable for the Season.*

ILLUSTRATED ADVERTISEMENT, FROM THE "CHARLESTON GAZETTE," 1744.

against negro-keeping; whereupon he came to Pennsylvania to be a thorn in the side of respectable Quakerdom. Hating luxury and ostentation, eating no food that had cost animal life, and using nothing that was in any way the result of slave labor, Lay was the forerunner of the radical come-outers who lent grotesqueness to later antislavery agitations. His short, hunchbacked figure, long nose, and "milk-white" uncut beard hanging on his breast, with his white overcoat, made him a startling apparition when he sought interviews with men in authority to complain of the sin of slave-holding, or attended — a most unwelcome intruder — now one and now another Quaker meeting to taunt the very elders and high-professing Friends with the sin of keeping slaves. He resorted to sensational and dramatic tricks to excite the imaginations of his reluctant hearers; and once, when thrust neck and heels out of meeting, he lay still where he had fallen until the meeting dispersed, "not feeling free" to get up himself, but waiting for those to take him up who had cast him there.

Of a very different type were two reformers who followed Lay. John Woolman, a rising merchant at Mount Holly in New Jersey, feeling "a stop in his mind," gave up a prosperous business and worked at the trade of tailor, without journeyman or apprentice, that he might be free from distraction, and have leisure for good works. He lived austerely. His clothes were undyed, the woolen white, the linen the natural color of the flax, while his hat was obviously of the natural beaver fur. He held that dyes concealed dirt, and were opposed to the spirit of cleanliness and purity. He could not be called eloquent, but he possessed what others have purchased with a great price of pains and application,

namely, the gift of expressing his thoughts with lucidity and precision; and his style has long been a matter of admiration with men of letters. In the beauty of his visions and meditations, and in enthusiastic self-sacrifice, he was a Quaker St. Francis. His conciliatory temper, perfect freedom from vanity and cupidity, joined to a rare practical wisdom, or rather tact, made him one of the leading agents in eradicating slave-holding from the Society of Friends, a work to which he devoted years of energetic and persistent toil. But he was without bitterness; if any one spoke severely against slave-holding Friends, he forthwith "felt a tenderness" for those entangled in a system so hard to rid one's self of.

Of a more restless and diffused activity, and with a more liberal culture, but of the same exquisitely gentle spirit, was Anthony Benezet. Brought from France in infancy, by parents who were Huguenot refugees, he became a Quaker school-master in Philadelphia, a reformer of school methods, a writer of reformed text-books, a pamphleteer against war, a teacher of negroes in night-schools, a promoter of hospitals, a benefactor of the poor, a disseminator of methods for resuscitating the drowned, a chief friend and protector of the Acadian exiles, and a correspondent of philanthropists and philosophers in Europe; — all these, besides being an ardent opposer of negro slavery. This indefatigable little man, who had freed his slaves and given away the most of his substance in charity, had also his oddities; he wore plush clothes, because the material lasted so long that it proved economical and left him more to give away; moreover, when worn threadbare the plush garments were still strong enough to cover some poor man. Both Woolman and Benezet enjoyed the highest reputation for sanctity and purity of motive; and their influence did most to bring the Pennsylvania Quakers to the critical decision of 1758, that all Friends must cease to hold slaves, or be disowned.



**RUN away, on the 3d Day of May last, a young Negro Boy, named Joe, this Country born, formerly belonged to Capt. Hugh Hest. Whoever brings the said Boy to the Subscriber at Edisto, or to the Work House in Charles Town, shall have 3 l reward. On the contrary whoever harbours the said Boy, may depend upon being severely prosecuted, by**  
**Thomas Colsbam.**

So great was the admiration excited by Benezet's disinterested character, that a Revolutionary officer is reported to have said, when he was buried: "I would rather be Benezet in that coffin than Washington in his glory."

The early New England Puritans were strongly committed to the liberty of the poor, as it was understood in the seventeenth century. In the fundamental law of Massachusetts and Connecticut, villeinage and other feudal servitudes were prohibited, and in 1646 the Massachusetts General Court actually undertook to send back to Africa negroes who had been kidnapped by a slaver, and to send with them a letter of apology and explanation. But the Calvinist reverence for the law of Moses was a less elastic standard than the "inward light" of the followers of Fox. If the early Puritan, bound to the letter of Scripture, was less likely to run into aberrant fanaticism than the Friend, he was also less quick to gain new and modern views of duty. Refusing to participate with "man-stealers," the textual conscience of the Massachusetts forefathers did not shrink from selling Indians captured in war into chattel slavery, or from buying slaves who appeared to have come into bondage otherwise than by downright kidnapping.

These nice distinctions could not be kept up, and thousands of negro slaves were sold into New England without any question for conscience' sake. Some merchants of Boston engaged in the Guinea trade, of which however, Newport was the great cen-

ter. Before the antislavery writings of the Quakers, Burling, Lay, and Sandiford, had appeared, an influential but rather timid voice, that of Judge Sewall, was heard opposing the importation of slaves to Massachusetts. He had been led by the narrow theological spirit in which he was bred into grievous mistakes in the witchcraft trials, but he was an honest and even a scrupulous man. Fond of popular favor and shrinking from censure, it cost him a struggle to give to the press, in 1700, his little tract against the slave-trade, entitled "The Selling of Joseph." It shows a moral insight ahead of the time, but its influence was probably not great.

With the rising of the strong tide of liberal and democratic feeling which preceded the revolutionary struggle, there set in a vigorous movement against New England slavery. Writers in Boston took the part of the negroes, and the pamphlets of Woolman and Benezet were circulated there by the Quakers. Some Massachusetts slaves brought suit for freedom in 1669, and this was granted in every case; the verdicts were given more out of deference to the drift of public sentiment than from the soundness of the argument drawn from the fact that no positive law of the colony expressly established slavery. Thus, while the Quaker agitation against negro slavery was a religious movement, whose direct results were confined to the liberation of slaves held by members of the Society, the New England agitation was political in its origin and effect.

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## BRAXTON'S NEW ART.

THE lively "Bob" and "Gus" were skylarking in the wide, comfortable hall. It was the hour following the afternoon Washington dinner, a repast which has something of a place of its own, unlike the general run of dinners elsewhere. Its time is fixed by the exigencies of the public business of the United States of America.

The scene of the sports was a Washington boarding-house, somewhat different from ordinary boarding-houses. It had once been a private mansion of dignity and state. Its hall was provided with old-fashioned, hair-cloth sofa and chairs, and a square platform staircase mounted at the back. Without, its front, in a bulged or curved pattern, was of old red brick, upon which the sun shone genially. A clustering wistaria vine climbed nearly to its cornice, and above the cornice peeped the tops of some slated dormer windows. The whole was of a certain warm and friendly air, well borne out by the condition of things within.

There were few transient comers among the inmates. The tone was fixed by a pleasant set of people of Southern affinities and sufficient means who had been there time out of mind, and talked in a drowsy way about the superiority of the past and the degeneracy of the present day. Retired Mr. Boltwood, that gentleman and lawyer of the old school, once of Alexandria, boasted of having been the intimate of Henry Clay. The Dunsmore family, of the Eastern Shore, Maryland, had had daughters married, and Mr. Greenway, of Prince George's County, buried his wife from there.

The habits of the house were set by that part of its occupants engaged in the official business, and its life ticked, as it were, with the clocks in government offices. This part comprised Congressmen who came down from the Capitol to rehearse at table — sometimes imprudently, perhaps — the run of the doings of national moment at the day's session. There were upper private secretaries and