

trial of all *crimes*, except in cases of impeachment, shall be by jury.

As the slave owners were called the only *privileged* class in the United States, it is pertinent to inquire if they did not exist in all the States when the Union was formed, and if the North did not sell their title to be yet a privileged class for a mess of pottage; and then howled at the purchasers for being a privileged people!

Who demanded the continual enlargement of slavery by making it legal to steal or purchase negroes from Africa until the year 1808, to give employment to the six hundred slave ships owned in the North? for the statement is that toward the close of the slave trade there were about that number belonging to New England and New York engaged in that pious enterprise. We know the town of Newport, R. I., had one hundred and seventy ships employed in this money-making trade in the year 1750, and undoubtedly the number increased largely in after years, when made legal; so, on the whole, no doubt six hundred ships were in the trade.

The question here presents itself—and it is a proper one to ask—who first owned these slaves; how did they obtain them; how did they treat them; and to whom did they sell these human beings for money; and then, with the price of blood in their pockets, begin to preach against the sin of slavery? Ye hypocrites! who thank God “we are not slave owners, we got rid of them long ago.”

It has been said by a Northern writer that “indirectly, and for the purpose of a more equal distribution of direct taxes, the framers of the constitution tolerated while they condemned slavery; but they tolerated it because they believed it would soon disappear. They even refused to allow the charter of their own liberties to be polluted by the mention of the word *slave*; but take heed, did not this convention give way to the clamor of the owners of slave ships to continue for twenty years the increase of slavery? They could not, consistently with honor or self-respect, transmit to future ages the evidence that some of them had trampled upon the inalienable rights of others.”

“Though slavery was thus tolerated by being ignored, we should not dishonor the memory of those who organized the government to suppose that they did intend to bestow upon it the

power to maintain its own authority, the right to overthrow or remove slavery or whatever might prove fatal to its permanence or destroy its usefulness.”

The answer is: *Yes*, but not by making war and laying waste the country; burning dwellings, public buildings, towns; sinking shipping, blockades; capturing, killing, imprisoning innocent people; nor by creating enormous debts, nor yet by cruel war, but by removing the evil by *compensation* “for the *term of service*” of the slaves to their owners.

The government is under obligation to compensate *parents*, masters of *apprentices*, masters of *slaves* for *loss of service* and labor of their subjects who are enlisted in the army and navy, for the constitution recognizes slaves as “persons held to labor or service.”

England compelled the abolition of slavery in her colonies, and she paid in compensation to the slave owners one hundred million dollars. Out of this, the Cape Colony, in Africa, obtained fifteen million dollars, which was about four hundred dollars per slave.

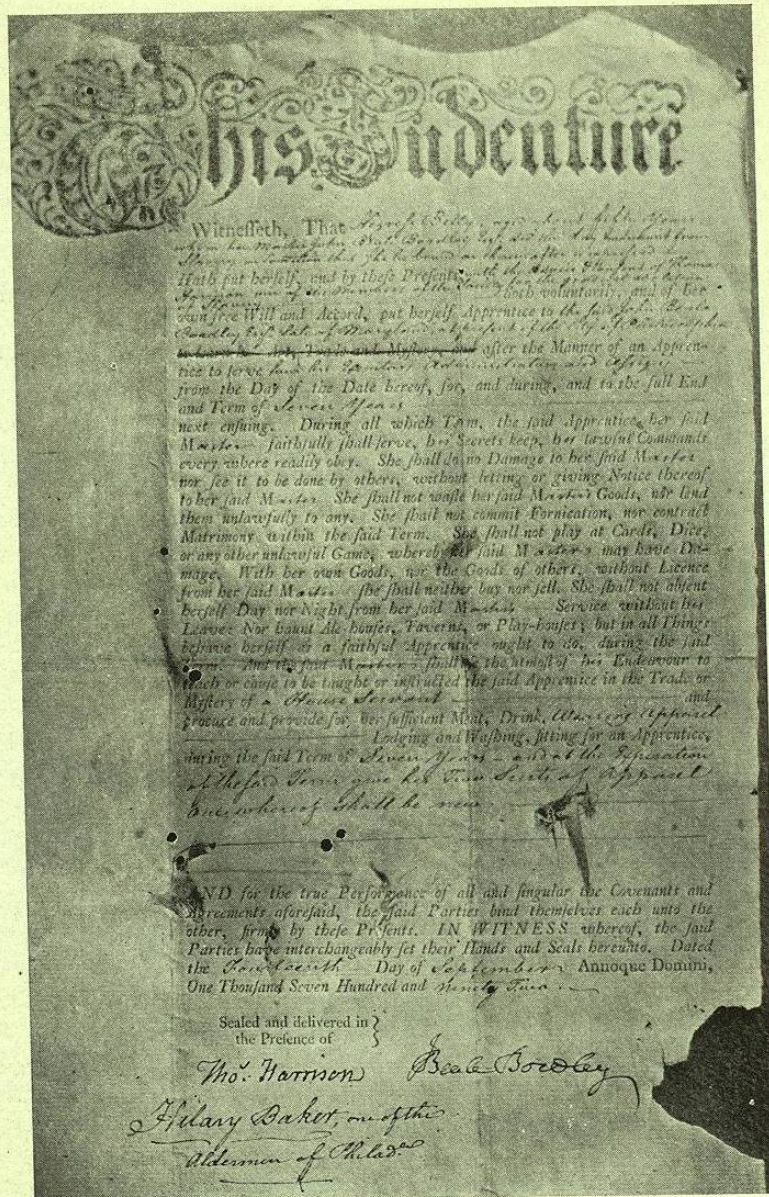
If, then, slavery was believed to be fatal to the permanence of the constitution, it could have been abolished as it was in England, or in some equitable way without the clash of arms.

Indenture.

This indenture is here presented for no other purpose than to evidence the mode of manumitting slaves by the Abolition Society in the City of Brotherly Love about four years after the constitution of the United States was framed.

From this instrument of writing it appears that “Betty” was set free (so called) on the 14th of September, 1792, on condition that she should become a bond servant by contract for seven years. Her signature to the indenture (original) is made on the left-hand corner, and not covered by the photograph.

From the wording of her indenture to her master Bordley, it would appear that verily her second condition was worse than her first, and her last worse than all; for in her fifty-seventh year she was to be turned adrift in her old age, possessed of only two suits of apparel—“one of which is to be new”—to struggle with adversity. She was now, however, free to play cards and dice,



go to alehouses, taverns, and playhouses, and dance and contract marriage, etc.

It would be interesting to know how she passed the remaining years of her life. That is buried in oblivion. Had she remained a slave—"held to a service of labor," which was her first condition—she would have had a home for life. To depend on the benevolence of the Northern people was to be in a worse condition than that of a slave, for the slave did know that he had a friend and a home for life.

How little is known, even at this day, at the North of the general relation between the owner and the slave in the latter days of slavery's existence! and I hope it will not shock the sensibility or puritanical feelings of ye scribes and Pharisees when I state that in the family graveyard near Columbus, Ga., where my wife's father and mother and some of her brothers and sisters rest, there repose the remains of *their* Aunt Betty, who nursed all the children of the family. She was, in name, a slave; in reality, she had all the privileges of a member of the family, and when she died the children declared she should sleep beside them in death, as she had lived with them in life and would rise with them at the resurrection.

I could tell where a slave, after her death, was carried near fifty miles to sleep in the family graveyard, with her master and mistress, who had preceded her to the sacred spot where dust returns to dust. These, and other instances I know, speak of kind feelings, and are significant of the ties that existed between the master and the slave; and this intimacy between master and slave, and almost companionship of children and servant, were more common than any harsh behavior toward them. A man who abused a slave was held in contempt, and was, I suppose, shunned by his neighbors. I had no experience with such men. Once the overseer on our place was going to punish a man for persisting in annoying another. The alleged offender sent for me, and I investigated the case. He was charged with being too gallant with another man's wife, an accusation very prevalent in high society now, when my lady can get a divorce in the morning and marry her admirer in the evening, or the husband do so, as the case may be. No punishment was given the negro in this matter, for the want of evidence; and I here state that no whipping of a negro ever occurred on the plantation.

The difference between the wage earner and the slave is, the *right to change residence*. The former, with his family of wife and children, is too often, for want of means, unable to avail himself of his right, and is therefore practically on a level in this respect with the bondsman, and he becomes reduced to the slavery of wages, which in this age—howling for wealth—becomes a pitiful condition, from which he seeks relief in strikes, so often in vain. He cannot succeed against the money power of the great trusts and monopolies, the power of the State and military interference of the United States forces; so in the end he is only steeped deeper in poverty. From all this the slave was free and happy, if his laughter, song, and dance indicate contentment.

I do dislike egotism, and yet to establish the fact that slaves did possess the power to change masters and homes—and you will admit that practical experience is better than any theory—I will tell you plainly what occurred to me touching this matter.

As administrator of an estate where the land and servants had to be sold, the heads of the families were given notice, months in advance, that they could visit or otherwise see the owners of the neighboring plantations and other persons with whom they would like to live, and induce them to buy the family at the sale; and when the sale was made I think all had selected homes. In this case, at the sales many were informed that they would be bid in by the heirs. I never knew a family to be separated.

I believe it was in the autumn of 1856 I wished to obtain a good cook, and went to New Orleans. Beard & May, cotton brokers, informed me that the German Vice Consul was going home, and had the best cook in the city. I called on Mr. Kock at his office, and he gave me a note to his wife, stating the object of my calling. Madame sent for the cook, and she came into the drawing room and was introduced to me, and my business made known to her. She was a fine-looking woman. She asked me the usual questions—such as “Biddy” in the intelligence office asks persons in quest of a cook—about where I lived, number in the family, if there was a church near by, nearest town, etc. Obtaining the desired information, she told her mistress she did not wish to leave the city, and she was directed to retire. Mrs. Kock said she wished the servant to be satisfied with her new home, etc.

Next Beard & May sent me to a French family. Madame came in, and sent for the cook she wished to sell. This one varied the questions, she asked even as to hot dinners on Sundays, and then she said she would not like to live on a plantation; and so the visit was fruitless. Then Beard & May told me to question the servants they held for sale, and there I found a woman about thirty years old, of fine personal appearance, who was willing to accept a position in the country, and I bought her.

A few days after, Beard & May called on me and said my cook, Maria, wanted to see me; so I went to her, and she then told me she wished I would buy her husband Jim. I expressed my displeasure that she had not told me she was married before I bought her. However, I bought Jim to satisfy her, and took them both home with me. Maria was installed in the kitchen, and proved to be a good cook. Jim had charge of the horses, etc. At the beginning of summer we went North. Jim was put to work in the field. He soon ran away, stayed in the woods by day, came home often at night, and told the overseer that he would come home when I did. When we returned in the autumn, Jim came to see me and explained that he had never worked in the field; so he worked again at the stables and ginhouses. I now learned that Maria and Jim had never been married. When spring came, I told Jim I would take him back to New Orleans, and he was willing to go. I left him with Beard & May to be sold. When we returned in the fall Jim had not been sold. In the winter I visited New Orleans. The steamer arrived during the night. In the morning as I was going on shore I saw a number of fine hacks on the levee awaiting passengers; among them the driver of a fine carriage cried out: “O Master Sam, here is your carriage; ride with me. Don’t you know Jim? Mighty glad to see you, Master Sam.” He drove me to the St. Charles Hotel. Soon Jim came to see me, and I told him if he did not find a home for himself before I left the city I would have him sold to some one out in the country without consulting him. The result was, Jim got the owner of the livery stable to buy him, and that was the last I saw of Jim. No one would purchase Jim because he told every one who wanted him, “If you buy me, I will run away;” and so he hired himself out for about nine months, at twenty dollars per month, as a hack driver, which supported himself free of expense to me.

And now about Maria: In the spring she got in the habit of having fits, and would foam at the mouth, and the old cook would have to come over. This continued over two weeks.

One morning I saw my neighbor Courtney riding up to my gate rather rapidly. He was excited and said: "Capt. French, I want you to buy my man Parker or sell me Maria." Parker had the main charge of some one hundred and thirty servants on Courtney's place. As I had no use for Parker, I would not entertain buying him, and replied that I would sell him Maria. When he became more composed, he told me that "Parker had become stupid, thoughtless, and could not remember what was told him, and when I called him to account he informed me that he was so much in love with Maria that his mind was all 'up-sot,' but if I would only buy Maria he would be so happy, and be the best hand on the place if she were his wife." And so Maria became Parker's wife, and never feigned having fits any more. Marriage cured them. Her fits were all "put on" to get a new home at Courtney's.

I was now quite tired and wearied with cooks, but nevertheless, being in New Orleans, I made another venture. Beard & May said they had a good cook. She was a woman of about twenty, with a jolly round face, and said she was a fine cook, and I bought her. Her name was something like Amanda, as I remember it. She was a willing, good-natured creature, but so careless that half the dishes were spoiled; so during the summer I took her to New Orleans and left her with Beard & May (early in the morning), then drove to the hotel. I had finished my breakfast and was smoking in the rotunda, when I saw Amanda approaching, accompanied by a tall, elderly gentleman, to whom I was introduced, naming him "my new master." He was from one of the parishes of the State. He asked me some questions about his new servant, and said he thought her a good cook, and honest, from what she told him. He apologized for the early call, as he had to leave on the morning steamboat. Bidding Amanda good-by, I concluded to abide with our old cook again.

I have briefly sketched these, some of my experiences with slaves, to establish the fact that bondsmen on the Mississippi did have the privilege of selecting very often the persons with whom they wished to live, as well as the place, which is by poverty de-

