AMERICAN CIVILIZATION ILLUSTRATED

A GREAT SLAVE [illegible]

400 Men, Women and Children Sold.

MR. PIERCE M. BUTLER CHANGING HIS INVESTMENTS.

SCENES AT THE SALE.

HUMAN FEELINGS OF NO ACCOUNT.

MR. BUTLER GIVES EACH CHATTEL A DOLLAR.

The largest sale of human chattels that has been made in the expanded America for several years took place on Wednesday and Thursday of last week, at the [illegible]ne Course near the City of Savannah, Georgia. The lot consisted of four hundred and thirty-six men, women, children and infants, being but half of the negro stock remaining on the old Major Butler plantation which fell to one of the two heirs to that estate. Major Butler dying, left a property valued at more than a million of dollars. The major part of which was invested in rice and cotton plantations, and the slaves thereon, all of which immediately became descended to the heirs, his sons, Mr. John A. Butler, sometime deceased, and Mr. Pierce M. Butler, still living, and resident in the City of Philadelphia, in the free State of Pennsylvania. Leaves in the grand crash of 1857-8, and other exigencies of Speculation, rendered imperative the latter gentleman to realize on his Southern investments, that he may satisfy sundry pressing creditors, and be enabled to resume business with the surplus, if any. This accently led to a partition of the negro stock on the Georgia plantation, the negroes thereon inherited by the representatives of the other half, the widow of the late John A. Butler, and the negroes that were brought to the hammer last week were the property of Mr. Pierce M. Butler of Philadelphia, and were in fact sold to pay Mr. Pierce Butler's creditors. The entire transaction was conducted by Gen. Cadwallader, while Mr. Butler was present in person, attended by his business agent, to attend to his own interests.

The sale had been advertised largely for many weeks, and as the negroes were known to be a choice lot and very desirable property, the attendance of buyers was large. The break-up of an old family estate is so uncommon an occurrence that the affair was regarded with unusual interest throughout the South. For several days before the sale the streets of Savannah were crowded with negro speculators from North and South Carolina, Virginia, Georgia, Alabama and Louisiana, who had been attracted hither by the prospects of making good bargains. Nothing was heard for days, in the barrooms and public resorts but talk of the great sale, criticisms of the business affairs of Mr. Butler, and speculations as to the probable prices the stock would bring. The office of Joseph Bryan the negro broker who had the management of the sale, was thronged every day by eager inquirers in search of information, and by men who were anxious to buy, but where uncertain as to whether their securities would prove acceptable. Little parties were made up from the various hotels every day to visit the Race-Course, discuss the chances of the coming sale, look over the chattels, discuss their points, and make memoranda for guidance on the day of sale. The buyers were generally of a rough breed, slangy, profane and heartless, being for the most part, from the back river and swamp plantations, where the slaughter of public life are not considered of the slightest consequence. In fact the humanities are easily neglected by the petty tyrants of the rice fields that border the great Dismal Swamp, their knowledge of the interior of our best society comprehending only revolvers and kindred blackguardism.

Your correspondent was present at an early date, but as he easily anticipated the touching welcome that would, at such a time, be officiously extended to a representative of the Tribune, he was not in a mood to be social, and not desiring to be the recipient of a public demonstration from the enthusiastic Southern population, who at times overdo their hospitality and their guests, he did not placard his mission and claim his honors. Although he had the credentials of a high ground, he made himself a prominent figure in the pasture, and, wherever there was anything going on, there was he in the midst. At the sale might have been seen a busy individual, armed with pencil and catalogue, doing his memoranda, and, in the opinion of bystanders, of a knowing buyer pricing "likely negro fellows," talking confidentially to the smartest looking male, chucking the round-eyed youngsters under the chin, making an occasional bid for a large family, (a few bid—so low that somebody always instantly raised the bidder, and the bid was withdrawn, or withdrawn nominally retract,) and otherwise conducting himself like a rich planter, with forty thousand dollars where he could pick and choose. The Tribune's representative was much crowded with by some sympathizing persons, when the particularly fine lot on which he had fired his critical eye was sold and lost to him forever, because he happened to be down stairs at lunch just at the interesting moment.

WHERE THE NEGROES CAME FROM.

The negroes came from two plantations, the one a rice plantation near Darien in the State of Georgia, not far from the great Okefenokee Swamp, and the other a cotton plantation on the extreme northern point of St. Simon's Island, a little bit of an island in the Atlantic, cut off from Georgia main land by a branch of the sea, and a portion of the stock had been accustomed only to rice and cotton planting and culture, there were among them a number of very possible mechanics, who had been taught to do all the rougher sorts of mechanical work at the plantation. There were coopers, carpenters, shoemakers and blacksmiths, each one equal in his various craft to the ordinary requirements of a plantation—that is, the cooper could make rice-tierces, and possibly, on a pinch, make tubs and buckets; the carpenter could do the rough carpentry that the negroes require; the shoemaker could make shoes of the fashion required for the slaves, and the blacksmith was adequate to the manufacture of hoes and similar simple tools, and to such trifling repairs in the blacksmithing way as did not require much skill. Though probably no one of all these would be called a superior, or even an average workman among the masters of the craft, their knowledge of these various trades kept them in some ease for nearly as much as the man—that is a man without a negro—who has to pay at $900, would readily bring $1,600 or $1,700 if he was a passable blacksmith or cooper.

There were to light mulattoes in the whole lot of the Butler stock, and but very few that were even a shade removed from the native African. Cruger blackburn, who have been little dabbled by the admixture of degenerate Anglo-Saxon blood, and, for the most part, could boast that they were of as pure a breed as the purest blooded of Spain—a point in their favor in the eye of the buyer as well as in the physiologist, for too liberal an admixture of the blood of the dominant race brings a larger intelligence, a more vigorous brain, which, man, grows restless under the yoke, and impels to inquire into the definition of the word liberty, and the meaning of the starry flag which waves, as you may have heard, over the land of the free. The pure blooded negroes are much more docile and manageable than mulattoes, though less quick of comprehension, which makes them preferred by drivers, who can tolerate stupidity by the lash much easier than they can control intelligence by it.

None of the Butler slaves have ever been sold before, but have been on these two plantations since they were born. There have they lived their humble lives, and loved their single loves; here were they born, and there have many of them had children born unto them; here had they seen their first parents before them, and saw no reason to quit ground on which the old plantations that these unhappy ones are to see no more forever; here they left not only the well known scenes dear to them from very babyhood by a thousand fond associations, but the dear ones as lived by their side, perhaps brighter homes by ten of brighter faces; but all the clinging ties that bound them to living hearts were torn, for but one half of each of these two happy little communities was sent to the shambles, to be scattered to the four winds, but half were left behind, to weep. And who can tell how closely intertwined are the affections of a little band of four hundred persons living isolated from all the world beside, for nigh hith to middle age? Do they not naturally become one great family, each man a brother unto the rest?

It is true they were sold "in families;" but let us see: a man and his wife were called a "family," their parents and kindred were not taken into account; the man and wife might be sold to the pine woods of North Carolina, their brothers and sisters be scattered throughout the fields of Alabama and the rice swamps of Louisiana, while the parents might be left on the old plantation to wear out their weary lives in heavy grief, and lay their heads in far-off graves over which their children might never weep.

And so, many of the young people of Ivan that were at yet unencumbered by marriage, and how many aching hearts have been divorced by this summary proceeding, no man can ever know. And the separation is as utter, and is infinitely more hopeless than that made by the hand of death, for the dead have left the loved ones are committed to the care of a merciful Deity, but in the other instance, to the tender mercies of a slave driver. These dark-skinned unfortunates are perfectly untutored, and could not communicate by writing, even if they would know where to send letter missives. And so to each other, and to the old familiar places of their youth clung all their sympathies and affections, not less strong perhaps because they are so few. The black of grass on all the Butler estate is covered with the tears of those who have spent out in agony at the wreck that has been wrought in happy homes, and the crushing grief that has been laid on loving hearts.

But, then, what business have "niggers" with tears? Besides, Mr. Pierce Butler is a kind and a never dodge slave? which will appear in the sequel. And, and as it is, it was all necessary, because a gentleman was not able to live on the beggarly pittance of half a million, and no must seeds enter into speculations which turned out adverse.

HOW THEY WERE TREATED IN SAVANNAH.

The negroes were brought to [illegible] a small lots, at a time as could be conveniently taken care of, the last of them reaching the city the Friday before the sale. They were consigned to the care of Mr. J. Bryan, Auctioneer and Negro Broker, who was to feed and keep them at the expense of the owner, and, immediately on their arrival they were taken to the Race Course, and there quartered in the sheds erected for the accommodation of the horses and carriages of gentlemen attending the races. Into these sheds they were huddled pell-mell, without any regard, attention to the comfort that was necessary to prevent their becoming ill and unsalable. Each "family" had one or more boxes or bundles, in which were stowed such scanty articles of their clothing as were not brought into immediate requisition, and their tin dishes and gourds for their drinking and eating.

It is, perhaps, a fit tribute to large-handed munificence to say that, when the negro man was sold, there was no extra charge for the negro man's clothes; they went with the man, and were sold for nothing in the bill. Or to the negro man was a contemptible idea, for many of them had worldly wealth, in the shape of clothing and other valuables, to the extent of perhaps four or five dollars; and had all these been taken strictly into the account, the sum total of the sale would have been increased, perhaps, to the extent of a few hundred. We do not necessarily sell the harness with the horse; why, in the South, should the clothes go with the negro?

In these sheds were the chattels huddled together on the floor, there being no sign of bench or table. They eat and slept on the bare boards, their food being rice and beans, with occasionally a bit of bacon and corn bread. Their huge bundles were scattered over the floor, and during the day they were travelling to and fro, mostly moving about, or gathered into sorrowful groups, discussing the chances of their future fate. On the face of all was an expression of heavy grief; some appeared to be resigned to the hard stroke of Fortune that had fallen on them, others were moodily thinking and trying to make the best of it; some sat brooding moodily over their sorrows, their chins resting on their hands, their eyes staring vacantly, and their bodies rocking too and fro, with a restless motion that was never stilled, for very long at the time, by any one of the chattels, save for rest, though some occasionally turned aside to give way to a few quiet tears. They were dressed in every possible variety of unsouth and fantastic garb, in every style and of every imaginable color; the majority of them had on their best Sunday clothes, most of the men being clothed in the rough cloth that is made expressly for the slaves. The dresses assumed by the negro minxes when they give indications of coquetting, were, in many instances, exaggerated; they are instead, weak and unable to come up to the original. There was every variety of hat, with every imaginable touch; and there was every cut and style of coat and pantaloons, made with every conceivable variation of the fashion, and, taken as a general appearance of perfect looseness that is perfectly indescribable except to say that a Southern negro always looks as if he could shake his clothes off without taking his hands out of his pockets. The women, true to the fashion, had on their best bonnets, and every one made an attempt at finery. All were gorgeous turbans, generally manufactured in an instant out of a gay-colored handkerchief by a sudden and graceful twist of the fingers: though there was occasionally a more elaborate affair, a turban, perhaps, with a rosette set up with ease and ornamented with a few beads or bright bits of ribbon. Their dresses were mostly coarse stuff, though there were some of gaudy calicoes; a few had earrings, and one possessed the treasure of a string of yellow glass beads. The little ones were generally better and more carefully dressed than the older ones, the parental pride coming out in the shape of a yellow cap pointed like a miter, or a jacket with a strip of red broadcloth round the bottom. The children were the only ones who seemed to be happy in their old. The babies were generally good-natured, though when one would set up a yell the complaint soon attached the others, and a fall chorus would be the result. A young negro baby looks like an animated bit of India-rubber, and has wonderful powers of endurance. They are very prolific in the long show-room where the stock was all congregated the day of the sale, and those that were old enough to have defined ideas of locomotion were perpetually crawling away from their mothers, and getting under the feet of visitors. They have a passion for climbing, and made strenuous exertions to scale the legs of people who didn't belong to them; if a man stood still for a minute, he was certain to have a baby hanging to each leg—like a crab. They didn't object to being knocked down and trampled on, or being pitched out of the room or any tribe of that sort; but it seemed to discourert them to step on their fingers.

The slaves remained at the race-course, some of them for more than a week and all of them for four days before the sale. They were brought in in small lots, as buyers were expected to appear, that might enjoy that privilege, although none of them were sold at private sale. For these preliminary days their shed was constantly visited by speculators. The negroes were examined with as little consideration as if they had been horses. Men would come into the pen, months open to see their teeth, pinching their limbs to find how muscular they were, walking them up and down to detect any signs of lameness, making them stoop and bend in different ways that they might be certain there was no concealed rupture or wound; in addition to these examinations, asking them scores of questions relative to their qualifications and accomplishments. All these questions were answered to without a murmur, and in some instances with good natured cheerfulness—where the slave liked the appearance of the proposed buyer, and fancied that he might prove a kind "master."

The following curiously and scene is the type of a score of others that were there enacted:

"Brahm," chattel No. 5 in the catalogue, had taken a fancy to a benevolent looking middle-aged gentleman, who was standing by the stand, and knew that his powers of persuasion to induce the benevolent man to purchase him, with his wife, boy and girl, Molly, Israel and Savanda, chattels Nos. 6, 7 and 8. The gentleman was within the pow-wow whole journal the time, and, knowing, or fancying, that perhaps the happiness of his whole life depended on his success, was interesting, and the arguments he used were most pathetic. He made no appeal to the feelings of the buyer; he rested no hope on his comity and kindness, but only strove to show to the man that he would serve the home and blood he was entreating him to buy.

"Look at me, Massr; am prime rice planter; sho' you won't find a better man des me; ain't better on de whole plantat on; not a bit ond yat; do mo' work den any; no lazy, no sick, no nothin' bad; jes' like yer, Massr; I be good servant, Massr. Molly, too, my wife, fa, fus rate rice hand; mse at good as me. Stan' out yer, Molly, and let the gen'lm's see."

Molly advances, with her hands crossed on her breast, which makes a quick short courtesy, and stands mute, looking appealingly in the benevolent man's face. But Eliza talks all the faster.

"Show mas'yer arm Molly—good arm dat mas'r—she do a heap of work no' with dat arm yet. Let good mas'r see yer teeth Molly—ain dat mas's fine teeth? Mas'r, all gwine to be sold dis day. Come out yer Israel, walk arun' lak de gen'lm's see how spry you be'—

Then, pointing to the three-year old girl who stood with her chubby hands in her mouth, balding on to her mother's dress, and uncertain what to make of the strange scene.

"Little Vardy's only a chile yet; make prime gal by-and-by. Better buy us mas', we'n fer rate hargain'—and so on. But the benevolent gentleman would drive a closer bargain, and so bought somebody else.

Similar scenes were transacting all the while on every side—parents praising the strength and cleverness of their children, and showing off every muscle and sinew to the very best advantage, not with the excusable pride of other parents, but to make them the more desirable in the eyes of the man buyer; and, on the other hand, children excusing and mitigating the age and infirmities of parents, that they might be more marketable and fall, if possible, into kind hands. Not unfrequently these representations, if borne out by the facts, secured a purchaser. The women never spoke to the white men unless spoken to, and then made the conference as short as possible. Although the weather all during the whole time they were there exposed to the rude questions of vulgar men, spoke the first unwomanly or indelicate word, or conducted herself in any regard otherwise than as a modest woman should do; their conversation was carried on quite in a businesslike manner as they would have been had they been the highest ladies in the land, and through all the insults to which they were subjected they conducted themselves with the most perfect decorum and self-respect.

The sentiment of the subjoined characteristic dialogue was heard more than once repeated:

"Well, Colonal, I seen you looking sharp at shemaker Billy-fully. Going to buy her?

"Well, Major, I reckon. She's a good, big, strapping gal, and can do a heap o' work; but t'e five years rices she had any children. *She's done breeding, I reckon.*"

In the intervals of more active labor, the discussion of the reopening of the slave-trade was commenced, and the opinion seemed to be generally prevail that the revetablishment of the said trade is a consummation devoutly to be wished, and one red-faced Major or Colonel or Corporal clenched his remarks with the emphatic assertion that "Will have all the niggers in Africa over here in three years—we won't leave enough for seed."

THE SALE.

The Race Course at Savannah is situated about three miles from the city, in a pleasant spot, nearly surrounded by woods. As it rained violently during the morning of the sale, the attendance was thinned by carriages, and the result was that few attended but actual buyers, who had come from long distance, and could not afford to lose the opportunity. If the affair had come off in Yankee land there would have been a dozen enthusiastic abolitionists there to hiss and hoot at the Race Course, and some speculator would have bagged a nice little sum of money by the operation. But nothing of the kind was thought of here, and the only result was to the livery stables, the owners of which had sufficient Yankeism to charge double and pocket the money.

The convenience for getting to the ground were so limited that there were not enough buyers to warrant the opening of the sale for an hour or two after the advertised time. The people, however, grew impatient, and the prices became lower and lower, and the bidding began to look more encouragingly for the seller.

The negroes looked more uncomfortable than ever, the close confinement indoors for a number of days, and the chilliness of the place, had not agreed with them. The sale commenced at half past eleven, and the negroes were all ranged in a long show-room where the stock was all congregated the day of the sale, and those that were old enough to have defined ideas of locomotion were perpetually crawling away from their mothers, and getting under the feet of visitors. They have a passion for climbing, and made strenuous exertions to scale the legs of people who didn't belong to them; if a man stood still for a minute, he was certain to have a baby hanging to each leg—like a crab. They didn't object to being knocked down and trampled on, or being pitched out of the room or any tribe of that sort; but it seemed to discourert them to step on their fingers.

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