

Had some legislative provision been made with this view before the annexation of Texas, a period being fixed after which all the children born in this state should be free, that new territory would have afforded a useful outlet for the black population of Virginia, and whites would have supplied the vacancies which are now filled up by the breeding of negroes. In the absence of such enactments, Texas prolongs the duration of negro slavery in Virginia, aggravating one of its worst consequences, the internal slave trade, and keeping up the price of negroes at home. They are now selling for 500, 750, and 1000 dollars each, according to their qualifications. There are always dealers at Richmond, whose business it is to collect slaves for the southern market; and, until a gang is ready to start for the south, they are kept here well fed, and as cheerful as possible. In a court of the jail, where they are lodged, I see them every day amusing themselves by playing at quoits. How much this traffic is abhorred, even by those who encourage it, is shown by the low social position held by the dealer, even when he has made a large fortune. When they conduct gangs of fifty slaves at a time across the mountains to the Ohio river, they usually manacle some of the men, but on reaching the Ohio river, they have no longer any fear of their attempting an escape, and they then unshackle them.

That the condition of slaves in Virginia is steadily improving, all here seem agreed. One of the greatest evils of the system is the compulsory separation of members of the same family. Since my arrival at Richmond, a case has come to my knowledge, of a negro who petitioned a rich individual to purchase him, because he was going to be sold, and was in danger of being sent to New Orleans, his wife and child remaining in Virginia. But such instances are far less common than would be imagined, owing to the kind feeling of the southern planters toward their "own people," as they call them. Even in extreme cases, where the property of an insolvent is brought to the hammer, public opinion acts as a powerful check against the parting of kindred. We heard of two recent cases, one in which the parents were put up without their children, and the mother being in tears, no one would bid till the dealer put the children up