

The American Slave-Trade.

BY WILLIAM WELLS BROWN.

OF the many features which American Slavery presents, the most cruel is that of the Slave-trade. A traffic in the bodies and souls of native-born Americans, is carried on in the Slave-holding States to an extent little dreamed of by the great mass of the people in the non-Slave-holding States. The precise number of Slaves, carried from the Slave-raising to the Slave-consuming States, we have no means of knowing. But it must be very great, as forty thousand were sold and carried out of the State of Virginia, in one single year!

This heart-rending and cruel traffic is not confined to any particular class of persons.

No person forfeits his or her character or standing in society by being engaged in raising and selling Slaves to supply the cotton, sugar, and rice plantations of the South. Few persons who have visited the Slave States, have not, on their return, told of the gangs of Slaves they had seen on their way to the Southern market. This trade presents some of the most revolting and atrocious scenes which can be imagined. Slave-prisons, Slave-auctions, hand-cuffs, whips, chains, blood-hounds, and other instruments of cruelty, are part of the furniture which belongs to the American Slave-trade. It is enough to make humanity bleed at every pore, to see these implements of torture.

Known to God, only, is the amount of human agony and suffering which sends its cry from these Slave-prisons, unheard or unheeded by man, up to His ear: mothers, weeping for their children,—breaking the

night-silence with the shrieks of their breaking hearts. We wish no human being to experience emotions of needless pain, but we do wish that every man, woman and child, in New England, could visit a Southern Slave-prison and auction-stand.

I shall never forget a scene which took place in the city of St. Louis, while I was in Slavery. A man and his wife, both Slaves, were brought from the country to the city, for sale. They were taken to the rooms of AUSTIN & SAVAGE, Auctioneers. Several Slave-speculators, who are always to be found at auctions where Slaves are to be sold, were present. The man was first put up, and sold to the highest bidder. The wife was next ordered to ascend the platform. I was present. She slowly obeyed the order. The auctioneer commenced, and soon several hundred dollars were bid. My eyes were intensely fixed on the face of the woman,

whose cheeks were wet with tears. But a conversation between the Slave and his new master attracted my attention. I drew near them to listen. The Slave was begging his new master to purchase his wife. Said he, "Master, if you will only buy Fanny, I know you will get the worth of your money. She is a good cook, a good washer, and her last mistress liked her very much. If you will only buy her how happy I shall be." The new master replied that he did not want her, but if she sold cheap he would purchase her. I watched the countenance of the man while the different persons were bidding on his wife. When his new master bid on his wife you could see the smile upon his countenance, and the tears stop; but as soon as another would bid, you could see the countenance change and the tears start afresh. From this change of countenance one could see the workings of the inmost soul. But this sus-

pense did not last long; the wife was struck off to the highest bidder, who proved not to be the owner of her husband. As soon as they became aware that they were to be separated, they both burst into tears; and as she descended from the auction-stand, the husband walking up to her, and taking her by the hand, said, "Well, Fanny, we are to part forever, on earth; you have been a good wife to me. I did all that I could to get my new master to buy you; but he did not want you, and all I have to say is, I hope you will try to meet me in heaven. I shall try to meet you there." The wife made no reply, but her sobs and cries told, too well, her own feelings. I saw the countenances of a number of whites, who were present, and whose eyes were dim with tears, at hearing the man bid his wife farewell.

Such are but common occurrences in the Slave States. At these auction-stands, bones,

muscles, sinews, blood and nerves, of human beings, are sold, with as much indifference, as a farmer in the North sells a horse or sheep. And this great American nation is, at the present time, engaged in the Slave-trade. I have before me now the Washington "UNION," the organ of the Government, in which I find an advertisement of several Slaves to be sold for the benefit of the Government. They will, in all human probability, find homes among the rice-swamps of Georgia, or the cane-brakes of Mississippi.

With every disposition on the part of those who are engaged in it, to veil the truth, certain facts have, from time to time, transpired, sufficient to show, if not the full amount of the evil, at least that it is one of prodigious magnitude. And what is more to be wondered at, is the fact that the greatest Slave-market is to be found at the capital of the country! The American Slave-trader

marches by the capitol with his "coffle-gang," — the stars and stripes waving over their heads, and the Constitution of the United States in his pocket.

The Alexandria Gazette, speaking of the Slave-trade at the capitol, says, "Here you may behold fathers and brothers leaving behind them the dearest objects of affection, and moving slowly along in the mute agony of despair; there, the young mother, sobbing over the infant whose innocent smile seems but to increase her misery. From some you will hear the burst of bitter lamentation, while from others, the loud hysteric laugh breaks forth, denoting still deeper agony. Such is but a faint picture of the American Slave-Trade.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.