*Excerpts from: American Slavery As It Is*   
Theodore Weld  
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***READER, you are empannelled as a juror to try a plain case and bring in an honest verdict. The question at issue is not one of law, but of fact—“What is the actual condition of the slaves in the United States?”***

 SETTING:

 I feel it my duty to tell some things that I know about slavery, in order, if possible, to awaken more feeling at the North in behalf of the slave. The treatment of the slaves on the plantations where I had the greatest opportunity of getting knowledge, *was not so bad* as that on some neighboring estates, where the owners were noted for their cruelty. There were, however, other estates in the vicinity, where the treatment was better; the slaves were better clothed and fed, were not worked so hard, and more attention was paid to their quarters.

  The scenes that I have witnessed are enough to harrow up the soul; but could the slave be permitted to tell the story of his sufferings, which no white man, not linked with slavery, *is allowed to know,* the land would vomit out the horrible system, slaveholders and all, if they would not unclench their grasp upon their defenceless victims.

THE OVERSEER

When I first knew Mr. Swan's plantation, his overseer was a man who had been a Methodist minister. He treated the slaves with great cruelty. His reason for leaving the ministry and becoming an overseer, as I was informed, was this: his wife died, at which providence he was so enraged, that he swore he would not preach for the Lord another day. This man continued on the plantation about three years; at the close of which, on settlement of accounts, Mr. Swan owed him about $400, for which he turned him out a negro woman, and about twenty acres of land. He built a log hut, and took the woman to live with him; since which, I have been at his hut, and seen four or five mulatto children.

OLD AGE

To show the manner in which old and worn-out slaves are sometimes treated, I will state a fact Galloway owned a man about seventy years of age. The old man was sick and went to his hut; laid himself down on some straw with his feet to the fire, covered by a piece of an old blanket, and there lay four or five days, groaning in great distress, without any attention being paid him by his master, until death ended his miseries; he was then taken out and buried with as little ceremony and respect as would be paid to a brute.

CHILDBIRTH

Women are generally shown some little indulgence for three or four weeks previous to child-birth; they are at such times not often punished if they do not finish the task assigned them; it is, in some cases, passed over with a severe reprimand, and sometimes without any notice being taken of it. They are generally allowed four weeks after the birth of a child, before they are compelled to go into the field, they then take the child with them, attended sometimes by a little girl or boy, from the age of four to six, to take care of it while the mother is at work. When there is no child that can be spared, or not young enough for this service, the mother, after nursing, lays it under a tree, or by the side of a fence, and goes to her task, returning at stated intervals to nurse it. While I was on this plantation, a little negro girl, six years of age, destroyed the life of a child about two months old, which was left in her care. It seems this little nurse, so called, got tired of her charge and the labor of carrying it to the quarters at night, the mother being obliged to work as long as she could see. One evening she nursed the infant at sunset as usual, and sent it to the quarters. The little girl, on her way home, had to cross a run, or brook, which led down into the swamp; when she came to the brook she followed it into the swamp, then took the infant and plunged it head foremost into the water and mud, where it stuck fast; she there left it and went to the negro quarters. When the mother came in from the field, she asked the girl where the child was; she told her she had brought it home, but did not know where it was; the overseer was immediately informed, search was made, and it was found as above stated, and dead. The little girl was shut up in the barn, and confined there two or three weeks, when a speculator came along and bought her for two hundred dollars.