

THE

Black Man's Lament;

OR,

HOW TO MAKE SUGAR.

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THE
BLACK MAN'S LAMENT.



THE PETITION FOR ABOLISHING THE SLAVE-TRADE.

COME, listen to my plaintive ditty,
Ye tender hearts, and children dear!
And, should it move your souls to pity,
Oh! try to *end* the griefs you hear.



SUGAR-CANE.

There is a *beauteous plant* *, that grows
In western India's sultry clime,
Which makes, alas! the Black man's woes,
And also makes the White man's crime.

* "A field of canes, when standing in the month of November, when it is in arrow or full blossom, (says Beckford, in his descriptive account of the Island of Jamaica,) is one of the most beautiful productions that the pen or pencil can possibly describe. It, in common, rises from three to eight feet, or more, in height; a difference

For know, its tall gold stems contain
 A sweet rich juice, which White men prize;
 And that they may this *sugar* gain,
 The Negro toils, and bleeds, and *dies*.

But, Negro slave! *thyself* shall tell,
 Of past and present wrongs the story;
 And would all British hearts could feel,
 To *end* those wrongs were *Britain's glory*.

Negro speaks.

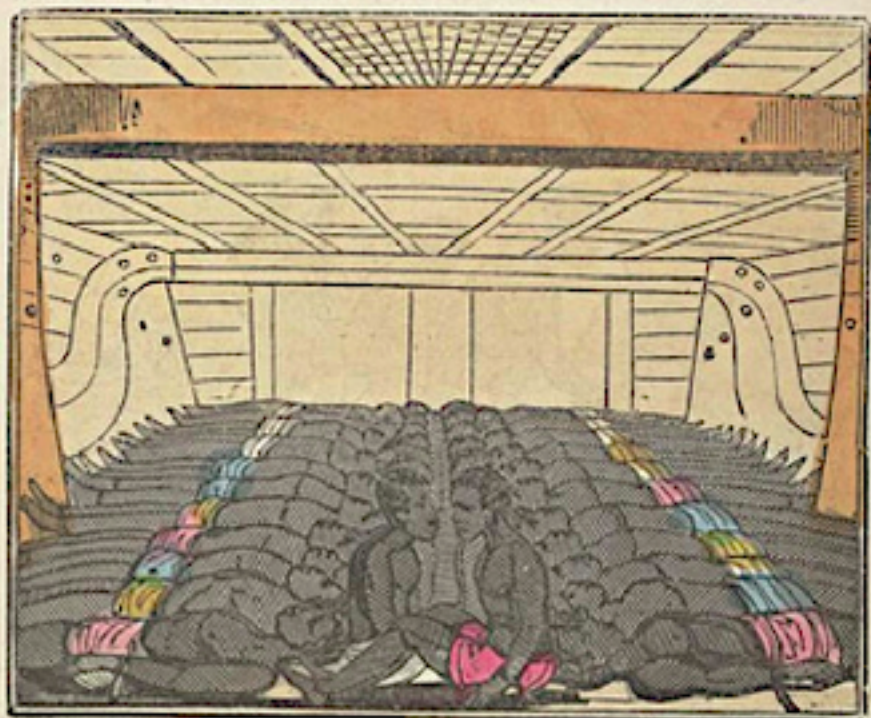
First to our own dear Negro land,
 His ships the cruel White man sends;
 And there contrives, by armed band,
 To tear us from our homes and friends;

of growth that very strongly marks the difference of soil, or the varieties of culture. It is, when ripe, of a bright and golden yellow; and, where obvious to the sun, is in many parts very beautifully streaked with red. The top is of a darkish green; but the more dry it becomes, (from either an excess of ripeness, or a continuance of drought,) of a russet yellow, with long and narrow leaves depending; from the centre of which, shoots up an arrow, like a silver wand, from two to six feet in height; and, from the summit of which, grows out a plume of white feathers, which are delicately fringed with a lilac dye, and indeed is, in its appearance, not much unlike the tuft that adorns this particular and elegant tree."



TORN FROM HIS FRIENDS.

From parents, brethren's fond embrace;
From tender wife, and child to tear;
Then in a darksome ship to place,
Pack'd close, like bales of cotton there.



A SLAVE-SHIP.

Oh! happy those, who, in that hour,
Die from their prison's putrid breath!
Since they escape from White man's pow'r,
From toils and stripes, and lingering death!



THE LANDING OF NEGROES.

For what awaited us on shore,
Soon as the ship had reach'd the strand,
Unloading its degraded store
Of freemen, forc'd from Negro land?



BUYING NEGROES FOR SLAVES, IN THE MARKET.

See! eager White men come around,
To choose and claim us for their slaves;
And make us envy those who found
In the dark ship their early graves:



STANDING IN LINES, WITH THE DRIVER BEHIND.

They bid black men and women stand
In lines, the drivers in the rear :
Poor Negroes hold a *hoe* in hand,
But they the wicked cart-whip bear.



CLEARING AWAY THE WEEDS.

Then we, in gangs, like beasts in droves,
Swift to the cane-fields driven are ;
There first our toil the weeds removes,
And next we holes for plants prepare.



THE EXHAUSTED SLAVE WHIPPED.

But woe to all, both old and young,
Women and men, or strong or weak,
Worn out or fresh, those gangs among,
That dare the toilsome line to break!



NEGROES HOLING THE CANE-FIELD.

As holes must all *at once* be made,
Together we must work or stop ;
Therefore, the whip our strength must aid,
And lash us when we pause or drop!



PLANTING.

When we have dug sufficient space,
 The bright-eye top* of many a cane,
 Lengthways, we in the trenches place,
 And *then* we trenches dig again.

* The top shoots are *full of eyes*, or *gems*, as they are called.



MANURING.

We cover next the plants with mould;
And e'en, ere fifteen days come round,
We can the slender sprouts behold,
Just shooting greenly from the ground.



HOEING.

The weeds about them clear'd away,
Then mould again by hand we throw;
And, at no very distant day,
Here Negroes plough, and there they hoe.



CUTTING DOWN THE SUGAR-CANE.

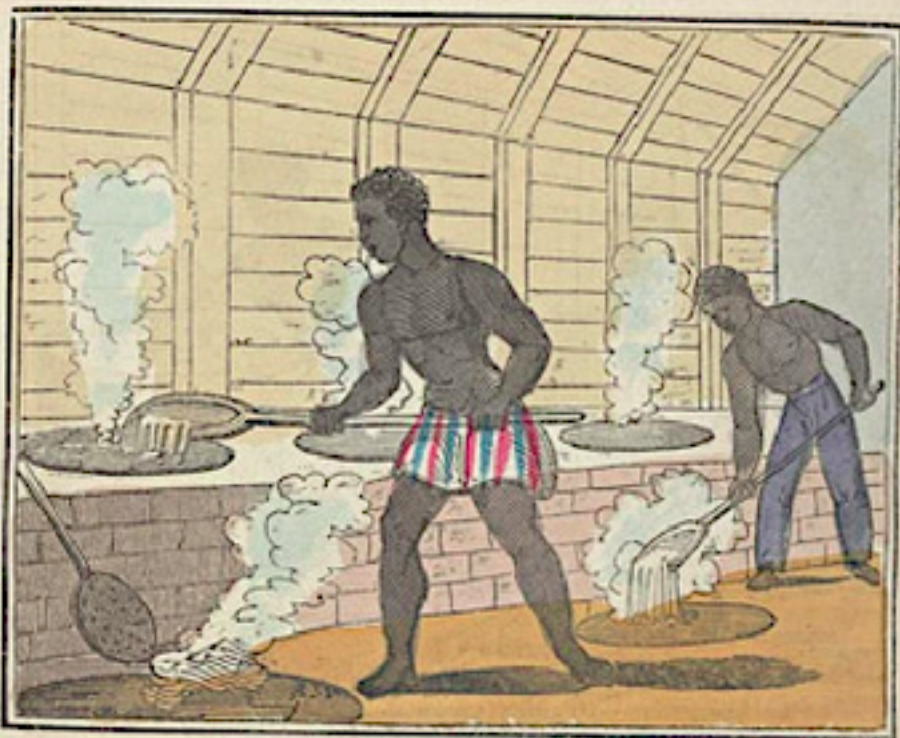
But when the crops are ripen'd quite,
'Tis then begin our saddest pains;
For then we toil both day and night,
Though fever burns within our veins.



THE BRUISING-MILL.

When 18 months complete their growth,
Then the tall canes rich juices fill ;
And we, to bring their liquor forth,
Convey them to the bruising-mill.

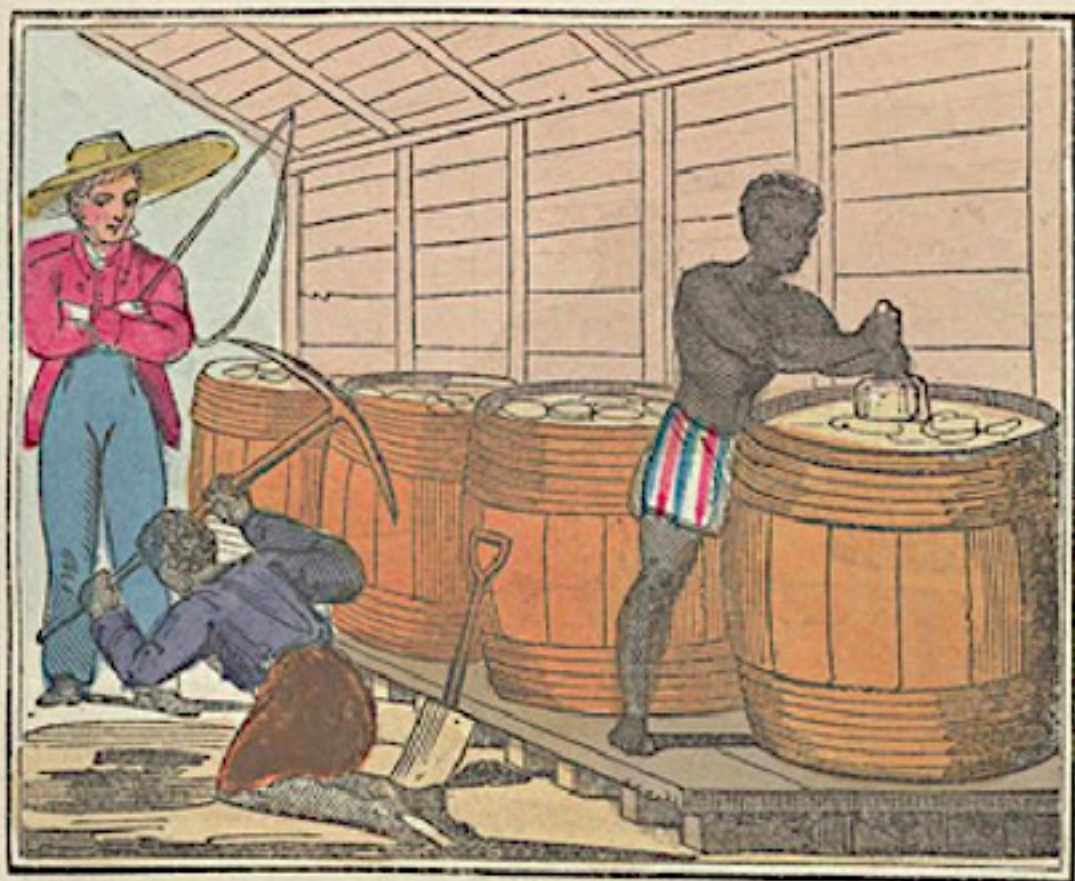
That mill, our labour, every hour,
Must with fresh loads of canes supply ;
And if we faint, the cart-whip's power,
Gives force which *nature's* powers deny.



BOILING AND COOLING THE SUGAR.

Our task is next to catch the juice
 In leaden bed, soon as it flows;
 And instant, lest it spoil for use,
 It into boiling vessels goes.

Nor one alone: four vessels more
 Receive and clear the sugar-tide.
 Six coolers next receive the store;
 Long vessels, shallow, wooden, *wide*.



FILLING AND HEADING CASKS.

While cooling, it begins to grain,
Or form in crystals white and clear ;
Then we remove the whole again,
And to the *curing-house* we bear.

Molasses there is drain'd away ;
The liquor is through hogsheads pour'd ;
The scum falls through, the crystals stay ;
The casks are clos'd, and soon on board.



SHIPPING THE CASKS.

The ships to English country go,
And bear the hardly-gotten treasure.
Oh! that good Englishmen could know
How Negroes suffer for their pleasure!

Five months, we, every week, alas!

Save when we eat, to work are driven :
Six days, three nights ; then, to each class,
Just twenty hours of rest are given.

But when the Sabbath-eve comes round,
That eve which White men sacred keep,
Again we at our toil are found,
And six days more we work and weep.

“ But, Negro slave, some men must toil.
The English peasant works all day ;
Turns up, and sows, and ploughs the soil.
Thou wouldst not, sure, have Negroes
play?”

“ Ah ! no. But Englishmen can work
Whene'er they like, and stop for breath ;
No driver dares, like any Turk,
Flog peasants on almost to death.

“ Who dares an English peasant flog,
Or buy, or sell, or steal away?
Who sheds his blood? treats him like dog,
Or fetters him like beasts of prey?

“ He has a cottage, he a wife;
If child he has, that child is free.
I am depriv'd of married life,
And my poor child were *slave* like *me*.

“ Unlike his home, ours is a shed
Of pine-tree trunks, unsquar'd, ill-clos'd;
Blanket we have, but not a bed,
Whene'er to short, chill sleep dispos'd.

“ Our clothing's ragged. All our food
Is rice, dried fish, and Indian meal.
Hard, scanty fare! Oh, would I could
Make White men Negroes' miseries
feel!”

“ But could you not, your huts around,
Raise plants for food, and poultry rear?
You might, if willing, till your ground,
And then some wants would disappear.”

“ Work for ourselves and others too?
When all our master's work is o'er,
How could we bear our own to do?
Poor, weary slaves, hot, scourg'd, and
sore!

“ Sometimes, 'tis true, when Sabbath-bell
Calls White man to the house of pray'r,
And makes poor blacks more sadly feel
'Tis thought *slaves* have no *business*
there:

“ Then Negroes try the earth to till,
And raise their food on Sabbath-day;
But Envy's pangs poor Negroes fill,
That we must *work* while others *pray*.

“ Then, where have we *one* legal right?
White men may bind, whip, torture
slave.

But oh! if we but strike one White,
Who can poor Negro help or save?

“ There are, I'm told, upon some isles,
Masters who gentle deign to be;
And there, perhaps, the Negro *smiles*,
But *smiling* Negroes *few* can see.

“ Well, I must learn to bear my pain;
And, lately, I am grown more calm;
For Christian men come o'er the main,
To pour in Negro souls a balm.

“ They tell us there is one above
Who died to save both bond and free;
And who, with eyes of equal love,
Beholds White man, and *humble me*.

“ They tell me if, with patient heart,
I bear my wrongs from day to day,
I shall, at death, to realms depart,
Where God wipes every tear away!

“ Yet still, at times, with fear I shrink ;
For, when with sense of injury prest,
I burn with rage! and *then* I think
I ne'er can *gain* that place of rest.”

He ceas'd; for here his tears would flow,
And ne'er resum'd his tale of *ruth*.
Alas! it rends my heart to know
He only told a *tale of truth*.

A. OPIE.

THE END.