

## **Recollections of Slavery by a Runaway Slave**

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As long as I can remember, I worked round the house in company with about 20 little boys and girls. We worked in the potato patch and cotton patch, and sometimes at the cotton gin; grubbed ground, pulled up roots, raked up chips and threw them on the log heap to burn; and rainy days we worked in the garden and cleared up the trash in the yard. As soon as children get old enough to walk about, they always set them to do something or other. Mistress was very strict, and if we did not do everything exactly to please her we were sure to get a whipping. An old man whipped us on our bare flesh with hickory switches. A man named Cleeton, and used to bring home a great many of them and put them in the chimney to dry. He called them "nice switches to whip the little negros with." A good many of us were entirely naked and the rest had nothing on but shirts. I never wore any clothes till I was big enough to plough. When they whipped us they often cut through our skin. They did not call it skin, but "hide." They say "a negro hasn't got any skin." Mistress had a little daughter named Jane, and she used to send her out to the old cotton house to watch us, and see if we were working smart. She crept along and peeped through the chinks, and if she saw us laughing and talking or a little merry, though we were about our tasks, she would say, "Ah, I see you idle, I shall go and tell ma." Then we would beg and say, "pray don't tell this time, Missy Jane," but she always did. It pleased her mightily to have us whipped. An old woman cooked for us when we were so small. We had two meals a day, one at morning and one at noon. They never gave us anything at night.

When I got a little older I was sent into the field to work under a driver. Children, when very young, are made to go there in droves. The driver shows them the first year what is to be done,

and after that they have to manage for themselves. Then if they don't do their task they get a whipping just like the rest. In some kinds of work we didn't have a task, only we had to keep along together, and the one that lagged behind was whipped.

While my old mistress owned me she hired me out several times. The first master who hired me was Col. Billy Mallard. He lived on Dean Swamp. I worked for him about two years. His overseer, named Tom Galloway, was all the time cutting and slashing among us. We used to be afraid of him as death. Sometimes five or six of us would be at work, and when we saw him coming with his whip we would tremble, for if everything was not exactly right, we knew we should be whipped. He would cut among us all, without stopping to enquire who was in fault. Children sometimes get so frightened that they run away when the overseer is coming.

Wm. Smeth, at the twelve mile house, hired me next. I staid with him one year. He afterwards moved on to the Rail Road. He had a neighbor named Bellinger, on the Dorchester road. One day master sent me to his plantation on an errand, and I saw a man rolling another all over the yard in a barrel, something like a rice cask, through which he had driven shingle nails. It was made on purpose to roll slaves in. He was sitting on a block, laughing to hear the man's cries. The one who was rolling wanted to stop, but he told him if he did'nt roll him well he would give him a hundred lashes.