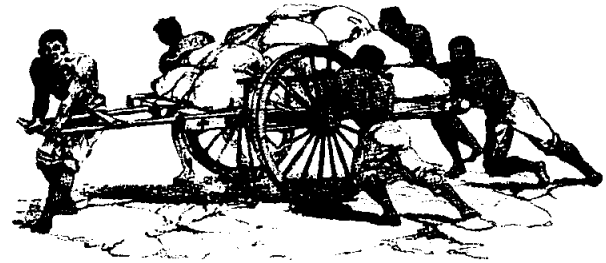


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Children of God's Fire

A Documentary History of Black Slavery
in Brazil



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2.4. The Masters and the Slaves: A Frenchman's Account of Society in Rural Pernambuco Early in the Nineteenth Century

The following analysis of Pernambucan rural society, written by a French cotton buyer, L. F. de Tollenare, who lived in Brazil from 1816 until 1818, contains portraits of the richest masters and the poorest slaves, as well as intermediate classes. Of special interest are the author's descriptions of the housing, food, and clothing of the several groups, his analyses of the interrelationships of those classes and their economy, and his comments on the roles of women in rural life. Tollenare's "Sunday notes," which were written in both Bahia and Pernambuco, remained unpublished until translated into Portuguese by Alfredo de Carvalho and printed in two parts early in this century. This translation was done from Carvalho's Portuguese version.

Source: L. F. de Tollenare, *Notas dominicaes tomadas durante uma residencia em Portugal e no Brasil nos annos de 1816, 1817 e 1818. Parte relativa a Pernambuco* (Recife: Empreza do *Jornal do Recife*, 1905), pp. 78-87, 93-96.

I will divide the inhabitants of these regions into three classes (I am not speaking of the slaves, who are nothing but cattle). These three classes are:

1. The owners of sugar mills [*senhores de engenho*], the great landowners.
2. The *lavradores*, a type of tenant farmer.
3. The *moradores*, squatters or small cultivators.

The sugar-mill owners are those who early received land grants from the crown, by donation or transfer. These subdivided grants constitute considerable properties even today, as can be seen from the expanses of 7,000 and 10,000 acres of which I spoke earlier; the crown does not have more lands to grant; foreigners should be made aware of this.

There are some sugar-mill owners who interest themselves in the theoretical aspects of agriculture and who make some effort to improve the methods of cultivation and production. I was conscious of their existence, at least, because of the derision of which they were the object. I visited six mills and encountered few notable men.

With bare legs, clad in a shirt and drawers or a dressing gown of printed calico, the sugar-mill owner, armed with a whip and visiting the dependencies of his estate, is a king who has only animals about

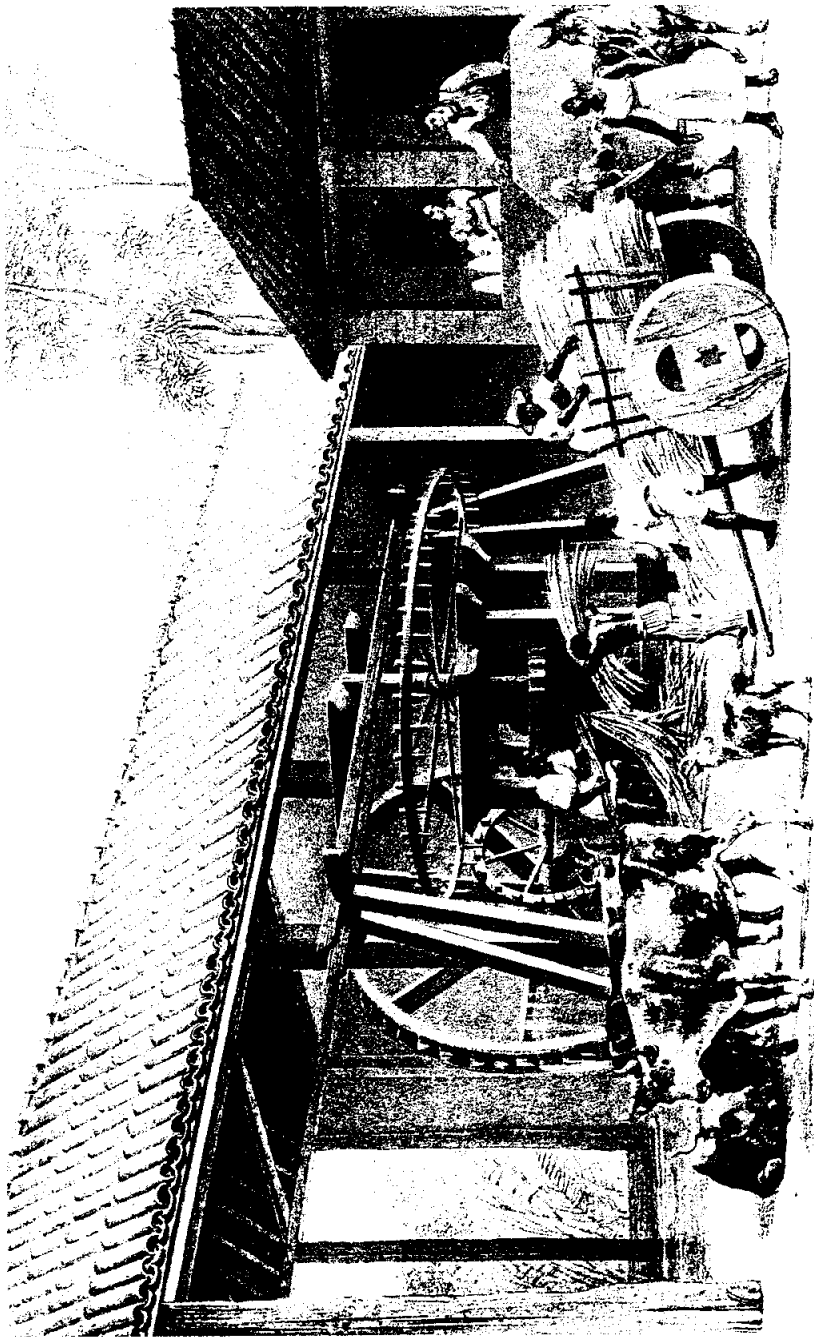
him: his blacks; his squatters or *moradores*, slaves whom he mistreats; and some hostile vassals who are his tenants or *lavradores*.

The great distances and lack of security on the roads do not encourage contacts with neighbors. Not even in the church are there opportunities to meet, because each mill either has its own chapel, or, what is more frequently the case, there isn't any church and no religious worship is carried on at all. The Portuguese government, which requires that a chaplain sail aboard merchant ships, would perhaps promote the progress of civilization by ordering that a priest be maintained at mills which have a certain number of blacks.

When a sugar-mill owner visits another one, the ladies do not make their appearance. I spent two days in the house of one of them, a very charming man who overwhelmed me with kindness, and I did not see his family either in the living room or at the dinner table. On a different occasion I arrived unexpectedly after supper at the house of another of them, the splendor of which promised better taste; I noticed on the floor a piece of embroidery which seemed to have been tossed there suddenly. I asked for a glass of water in order to have a chance to go into the next room, but they made me wait for a long time. The lady of the house prepared a choice meal, but I did not see her. Furthermore, the same thing happened to me in a country house near Recife that belonged to a native of Lisbon.

In these houses, where the owners reside for the whole year, one does not observe anything fashioned to make them comfortable; one does not even find the avenue which among [the French] adorn both the simple property and the sumptuous chateau, neither parks, nor gardens, nor walks, nor pavillions. Living in the midst of forests, the inhabitants seem to fear shadows; or, more precisely stated, up to the edge of the forest around the mill everything is denuded and scorched to a distance of a quarter of a league. I witnessed at Salgado [a sugar plantation near the town of Cabo] the cutting down for firewood of orange groves which the previous owner had planted near the house, either for his pleasure or his profit.

Generally the residences are elevated on pillars; the cellar serves as a stable or as a dwelling place for the blacks; a long stairway provides access to the main floor, and it is on this level, or terrace, where one can enjoy the cool air. The rooms do not have ceilings; instead the timberwork of the roof is exposed and, between its extremities and the walls that hold it up, there is a free space of five inches to increase the air currents. The interior divisions are made with simple lath partitions measuring nine to ten feet in height, so that all the rooms have the roof as a common ceiling.



5. Slaves Working at a Sugar Mill

Luxury consists of a great variety of silverware. When a foreigner is entertained, in order to wash himself he is given splendid vessels made of this metal, of which also the coffee trays used at table, the bridles and stirrups for the horses, and knife hilts are made. Some sugar-mill owners showed me luxurious and expensive English firearms, and I also saw porcelain tea sets from England of the most beautiful type.

I ought to say a few words about meals. Supper consists of an abundant and thick soup, in which garlic abounds, or some other plant of a very pronounced and disagreeable taste which I did not recognize. The first plate is boiled meat which is not very succulent, the tastelessness of which they try to conceal with bacon, which is always a little rancid, and with manioc flour, which each serves himself with his fingers. For a second plate they serve a chicken ragout and rice with pepper. Bread is not seen, although it is much appreciated; they could manufacture it from foreign flour, which Recife is well supplied with, but it is not the custom. The black men or mulatto women (I saw many of the latter serving at table) fill the glasses with wine as soon as they are emptied, but people do not persist in drinking; liqueurs are not served with dessert. . . .

The sugar-mill owners are the only landholders. The only exceptions I know of are some chapels erected 100 or 150 years ago by the piety of the Portuguese and endowed with 50 to 60 uncultivated acres. . . . The extension of the lands owned by the mills is therefore immense, and the capital invested in them is much less considerable than it was in the French [Caribbean] islands. Only the most important establishments have 140 to 150 blacks. One could estimate the importance of the mills by the number of slaves, if it were not for the existence of the *lavradores*.

The *lavradores* are tenants without leases. They plant cane, but do not own mills. They send the harvested cane to the mill that they are dependent upon, where it is transformed into sugar. Half of it belongs to the *lavrador* and half to the sugar-mill owner. The latter keeps the molasses, but furnishes the cases for the sugar. Each one pays his tithe separately. The *lavradores* normally possess from six to ten blacks and themselves wield the hoe. They are Brazilians of European descent, little mixed with mulattoes. I counted from two to three *lavradores* per mill.

This class is truly worthy of interest since it possesses some capital and performs some labor. Nevertheless, the law protects it less than it does the mill owners. Since they do not make contracts, once a piece of land becomes productive, the mill owner has the right to expel them without paying compensation. It should be recognized that leases of only a year are not very favorable to agriculture. The *lavrador* builds only a miserable hut, does not try to improve the soil, and makes only tem-

porary fences, because from one year to the next he can be expelled, and then all his labor is lost. He invests his capital in slaves and cattle, which he can always take with him. . . .

If I estimate an average of eight blacks for each *lavrador*, and sugar production at fifty *arrobas* per slave, which is not too much considering the vigilance and labor of the master himself, I can calculate the annual income of each *lavrador* at four hundred *arrobas* of sugar [about 12,800 pounds], which six or seven years ago was sold for about 3,000 francs. Now, this income is clear, since the *lavrador* does not buy anything at all to feed his blacks, and he lives very frugally from the manioc he plants.

Therefore, this class of capitalists, if favored by the government, is destined some day to exercise a major role in the political economy of Brazil. Consider the influence that they would have if the government would guarantee leases for nine years, and especially if an agrarian law were adopted that would obligate the present owners to make concessions, at stipulated prices, of certain parts of their uncultivated lands to anyone who might wish to buy them. Yet today everything remains exactly the opposite. I was witness to a rich mill owner's expulsion from his property of *all* the *lavradores* and squatters whom his less wealthy predecessors had allowed to establish themselves there. The number of exiles reached almost 600 persons, the property measuring two square leagues in size [about thirty square miles]. . . .

The *lavradores* are quite proud to receive on a basis of equality the foreigner who comes to visit them. Under the pretext of seeking shelter, I entered the houses of several to speak with them. The women disappeared as in the homes of ladies, though I was always offered sweets. I never managed to get them to accept the little presents of cheap jewelry which I had supplied myself with for the trip. This noble pride caused me to respect the hard-working *lavradores*, a class intermediate between the haughty mill owner and the lazy, subservient, and humble squatter. The *lavrador* has a miserable house, for the reasons I have already mentioned. However, when he abandons the hoe to go to Serinhaem [a nearby town] or to church, he dresses himself up like a city man, rides a good horse, and has stirrups and spurs made of silver.

The *moradores* or squatters are small settlers to whom the sugar-mill owners grant permission to erect a hut in the middle of the forest and to farm a small piece of land. The rent they pay is very small, worth at the most a tenth part of their gross product, without an obligation to pay the royal tithe. Like the *lavradores*, they do not have a contract, and the master can send them away whenever he wishes. As a general rule they are mixtures of mulattoes, free blacks, and Indians, but Indians and

pure blacks are rarely encountered among them. This free class comprises the true Brazilian population, an impoverished people because they perform little labor. It would seem logical that from this class a number of salaried workers would emerge, but this does not happen. The squatter refuses work, he plants a little manioc, and lives in idleness. His wife has a small income because, if the manioc crop is good, she can sell a bit of it and buy some clothing. This comprises their entire expense, because their furniture consists of only a few mats and clay pots. Not even a manioc scraper is found in all their houses.

The squatters live isolated, far from civil and religious authority, without comprehending, so to speak, the value of property. They replaced the Brazilian savages but have less value, since the latter at least had some political and national affiliation. The squatters know only their surroundings, and look upon all outsiders practically as enemies. The sugar-mill owners court their women for their pleasure; they flatter them greatly, but from these seductions acts of vengeance as well as stabbings result. Generally speaking, this class is hated and feared. Because they pay them little or badly and often rob them, the sugar-mill owners who have the right to dismiss the squatters fear taking this dangerous step in a country that lacks police. Assassinations are common, but do not result in any pursuit whatsoever. I knew a certain mill owner who did not travel alone a quarter of a league from his house, because of the hostility and treachery of his squatters. He had incurred their wrath, and I had similar reasons to fear them when I entered their huts. . . .

I promised to make a quick survey of the black population. I am not in possession, however, of enough information about the laws that govern them to be able to deal with the matter adequately. Here is what I can say at the moment in respect to them.

The Salgado mill contains about 130 to 140 slaves, including those of all ages, but there is no written list of them. Deducting the children, the sick, and the people employed in domestic service and in the infirmary, there remain only about a hundred people who are fit for agricultural labor. During the four or five months that the sugar harvest lasts, the toil of the mill blacks is most violent; they alternate so as to be able to stay on their feet for eighteen hours. I said earlier that they received for food a pound of manioc flour and seven ounces of meat. Here it is distributed already cooked. There are few properties on which slaves are allowed to plant something for themselves. Passing through the forests I sometimes came upon small clearings where the blacks had come secretly to plant a little manioc. These were certainly not the lazy ones. Nevertheless, Gonçalo [a slave] told me not to speak about it to their master, because this could expose them to punishment.

Upon arrival from Africa, the blacks who have not been baptized in Angola, Mozambique, or another place where there are Portuguese governors, receive baptism upon disembarking; this is nothing but a pointless formality, because they are not given any instruction whatsoever. At certain mills I saw the blacks being married by the priest, but in others they are united only by their whims or inclinations. In either case the master may sell separately the husband and the wife and the children to another buyer, regardless of how young they may be. A black baby is worth 200 francs at birth. Some masters make their slaves hear mass, but others save the cost of a chaplain, claiming that the sacrifice of the mass is a matter too grand for such people. Finally, there are mill owners who are more or less formalistic in matters of religion, and more or less able to appreciate its influence upon the conduct and habits of their slaves. It seems to me that it is in the interest of the masters to maintain family ties.

At the Salgado mill I saw only good slave quarters; everywhere, for that matter, they are of stone and lime and well roofed. Those of Salgado are ten feet wide and fifteen feet in depth, with a small interior division forming almost two rooms. It has a door which can be locked with a key, and a round opening toward the field to provide ventilation. The brick floor is two feet above the level of the adjacent ground, which makes such houses much more healthful than those of many French peasants. Each black is supposed to have his own private room, but love and friendship generally prevent them from living alone.

A mat, a clay cup or a gourd, sometimes a few claypots, and some tatters and rags make up the furnishings of the home of a black couple. All have permission to light a fire in their rooms and they take advantage of it. Their food is furnished to them already prepared, so that they have no need to cook. However, the fire is a distraction for them and serves for preparing fish or other food which they manage to acquire, lawfully or not. I observed that they were very careful to lock their doors and that when they were barred inside their houses they opened them with great reluctance. Although I was rather friendly with them in Salgado, I had some difficulty in satisfying my curiosity regarding the interior of their huts. I also saw some of the latter that were made of mud and covered with cocoa leaves. . . .

The black women generally have a flexible and elegant figure, the shoulders and arms very well formed. Many are seen who could qualify as pretty women if their necks were longer, giving more freedom to their heads. Their breasts are firm and fleshy, and they seem to understand their value, proving themselves very wise by concealing them, since this, in fact, is the way they commit terrible sins. It is unusual to see a black

woman, even seventeen or eighteen years of age, whose neck has retained the shape which we prize so much and which European art imitates more or less badly. Nevertheless, they are not without a certain ability to hide its flaccidness [goiter?] with a piece of blue or red cloth. They tie these under their armpits, arrange the draping nicely over their waists and thighs, and make a large knot over the bosom, which hides the deformity I have just mentioned. The shoulders remain naked and the knees nearly uncovered, the scantiness of the cloth, which is made even tinier because of the part reserved for creating the knot, betraying all the body's movements, and I must say that they are all attractive and very graceful. . . . Their legs are normal, but their feet are damaged by hard work and the lack of footwear. They habitually have their heads uncovered, though some are given round hats which are not very becoming to them. They are happy when they can adorn themselves with a necklace or some bits of jewelry. Many of them, lacking such ornaments, attach a feather or a small round stick of wood to their ears. A tobacco pipe a foot long is usually thrust through the knotted cloth over the breast, and there it figures majestically like the dagger belonging to a leading lady of the theater.

This is the portrait of the black women who fix themselves up a bit. One sees others in a state of abandonment which is much less picturesque, dressed in a tattered shirt and an old petticoat which leaves the part beneath the breasts uncovered. Always, however, when they wrap their bodies or heads with a piece of cloth, the result is quite agreeable.

The men have a better appearance when they are naked than the women, because of the flabbiness of the breasts that disfigures the latter. They are less robust than our porters, but the habit of going about without clothing makes their movements less wooden. What they possess that is better are their arched chests and their sinewy thighs. It is rare to see gray and wrinkled persons among them. Their black, shiny-smooth skin, destitute of hair, allows one to observe the entire play of their very active muscles. The arms and especially the legs are usually weak, but I saw some blacks with Apollo-like physiques.

Those coming from Africa have their shoulders, arms, and chests covered with symmetrical marks, which seem to be made with a hot iron, and the women also display these marks. For clothing the men are given a shirt and some breeches, but these garments evidently make them uncomfortable, and few preserve them, particularly the shirts. Most of the time they are satisfied with tying a rope around their loins from which hangs, both in front and behind, a small piece of cloth with which they try to hide that which modesty does not permit them to display.

The children also get clothing, but they make quick work of it so

that they can go about naked. When they reach fourteen or fifteen years of age they are beaten with switches to make them more careful. At that time some are seen wearing their shirts hung over one shoulder in the fashion of Roman patricians, and, seen thus, they are reminiscent of Greek statues.

The blacks employed in domestic service, or close to their masters, dress with less elegance and more in the European manner. They take care of their breeches and shirts and sometimes even possess a waistcoat. Gonçalo had an embroidered shirt, and when he wore his lace hat and small trinkets which I had given him his pride was greater than that of any dandy; but when we went out hunting, his greatest pleasure was to leave at home both his necessary and unnecessary items of clothing.

2.5. "The African Man Transformed into the American Beast": Slavery in Rural Pernambuco in the 1840's

The kind of treatment slaves received in rural areas was dependent in part upon local economic, social, and cultural conditions, including especially the kinds of products slaves produced, and the relative prosperity, stagnation, or decline of the areas where slaves lived and worked. Obviously, too, the personal character of masters and overseers was an important determinant of the amount of hardship and suffering that slaves endured, or of how much they might be allowed to soften their condition through pleasurable activities and relationships.

The following accounts of slavery in Pernambuco were contained in two separate reports by H. Augustus Cowper, British Consul in Recife, to the Earl of Aberdeen. Written in the mid-1840s, they were the result of Cowper's long journeys of investigation through several regions of the province and of many visits to sugar *engenhos* and cattle and cotton estates in the interior. A conscientious observer like Tollenare before him, Cowper confessed that some of his preconceived ideas about slavery were altered by personal observation. Slavery was not everywhere the same, he learned, even in a single province. In his travels he encountered an intelligent patriarch as well as sinister brutes, the harsh reality of the sugar estates and milder, even easygoing forms of slavery in the backland regions of Pernambuco.

Sources: *Class B. Correspondence with Spain, Portugal, Brazil, etc. Relative to the Slave Trade, 1843* (London, 1844), pp. 363-369; *Class B. Correspondence on the Slave Trade with Foreign Powers. Parties to Treaties, under Which Captured Vessels Are to Be Tried by Mixed Commissions. From January 1 to December 31, 1846* (London, 1847), pp. 290-292.

Dispatch of August 4, 1843

Of the 13 *engenhos* which I visited, the 4 last, Agoa Fria, Trapiche, Anjo, and Jaceru, belonging to Colonel Gaspar de Menezes Vasconcellos Drummond, afforded me the greatest interest, and, as regards the state of the slaves, may be looked upon as the locality where they are treated with the greatest humanity in the province. The proprietor of this noble property, situated within a ring fence, and bounded by two navigable rivers, the Seringhaem and Formosa, is one of the most interesting and remarkable men with whom I have had the good fortune to meet in Brazil, and I should not flatter him, indeed, if I added, in any country; he is anciently descended from a noble Scotch family, of which he is extremely proud, and the Vasconcellos rank amongst the first families of this empire; his brothers have been for many years employed in Europe, in the diplomatic service of Brazil, and he himself in its army until 8 years past, when he purchased his *engenhos*, without having visited Europe.

Colonel Drummond, possessing natural talents of the highest order, has employed them in the acquirement of knowledge of the most varied description; his physical powers are perfectly astonishing, and his habits offer the most striking contrast to the general indolence of the people. He is probably 50 years of age, slightly made, with nothing very remarkable in his appearance than an eye of astonishing brilliancy; he often rises at daybreak, mounts his horse, superintends the labours of his people, and returns at night frequently without having tasted food. He tells me that after this he sometimes dictates 20 despatches to his secretary, which his official situation as delegate of the police obliges him to attend to. His estates are the best cultivated in the province; they extend 3 leagues along the coast from the embouchures of the Seringhaem to that of the Formosa, and 7 leagues inland. They produce 1,000 cases of sugar, besides *mandioca*, Indian corn, &c., and are worked by 400 slaves, and perhaps 50 freemen. Anjo and Trapiche have 6-horse-power steam engines, and Agoa Fria and Jaceru engines worked by water-power, all of English manufacture. His stills for the distillation of rum are also British; indeed, so strongly is Colonel Drummond attached to Great Britain, that he never admits the manufactures of other countries upon his estates.

The system by which he governs the slaves is peculiar; he has drawn up a code of laws avowedly upon the principles of the martial law; each slave that is purchased, or who arrives at a discretionary age, has this code explained to him, and by it alone can he be tried or punished for his offences. No overseer or administrator can punish a slave; he dare not

even strike him, he must bring him before the Colonel, who reserves the judicial power entirely in his own hands; the men are mustered at daybreak, and answer "Prompto" [Ready] to their names; the women, "Senhor." If anyone is unwell, instead of replying he steps out; and the Colonel, who to his other qualifications, adds those of an excellent physician, examines him, and prescribes accordingly; the promptos then go to their work, taking their food with them, and do not return until 8 in the evening, when they are again mustered and dismissed. An interesting ceremony takes place at this time; the children, or as the Colonel calls them, his "Caçadores," [Huntsmen] are mustered with their calabashes of food in their hands, and not being under such severe discipline as their parents, pull the Colonel about, slap him, and play all sorts of tricks; at the word of command, "Agora," [Now] they draw up, the Colonel inquires, "Está servido?" [God is served?] "Sim, senhor," they scream together; "bom está com fome?" [are you good and hungry?]. "Sim, senhor,"—"Então via comer;" [then go and eat] and away they scamper as happy as if they were not slaves.

Colonel Drummond endeavours to prevent concubinage by marrying the girls off as they attain their 18th year; he does not force this upon them, but if they afterwards commit themselves, he sends them to the fields, which they naturally dislike, for the hoe is a dreadful instrument for a female to wield; he does not allow a woman to perform labour after the 5th month of her pregnancy, and she continues her light domestic occupations for 12 months after her child is born, that she may rear it. His domestic slaves are all females, and are never allowed to pass the threshold, but sit for 15 hours a day making clothes for the rest of the slaves.

The *Senzala*, or slave-building, at Trapiche, is a perfect picture of comfort and neatness; but I cannot speak so favourably of this portion of his other *engenhos*. Each slave is allowed 2 suits of clothes per annum and a blanket; their rations are served out once a week, consisting of dried beef from Ceará, and farinha [manioc flour]; the quantity, the military allowance to the soldiers of the line; they work 18 hours per diem during the crop-time, and 14 hours during the season of comparative rest.

I have been thus particular in describing Colonel Drummond, not only because his system with the slaves presents a pleasing contrast to that which I have to report, but because I foresee that, in the event of Her Majesty's Government requiring information or assistance in any project of Brazilian emancipation, Colonel Drummond might prove a most valuable auxiliary, partly from his fortunately strong Anglican prejudices, and from his influence, wealth, and talents. . . .

I have spoken of "irresponsible tyranny." I propose to offer to your

Lordship one or two examples of it, which may demonstrate how a slave may be ill-treated in Brazil, and with what absolute legal impunity the most barbarous and abominable crimes may be perpetrated at the *engenbos*. . . . However improbable some of these stories may appear to your Lordship, I cannot doubt them, as I have seen some of the poor creatures [who were mutilated by Colonel Antonio Francisco de Rego Barros of the Genipapo sugar estate]. He is most positively stated to have worked his slaves, women as well as men, 20 hours per diem; to have been in the constant habit of maiming them; and he is said to have actually killed upwards of 20 in his fury. If a woman offended him, his favourite punishment was the injection of pepper vinegar into the vagina, if a man, emasculation. He killed one man, a slave of course, who, suffering under acute syphilis, disturbed him by his groans, by cutting away his parts with a razor; and he is accused of burying several persons alive, some say one of his own children.

But the following story I had confirmed by the mother and sister of the victim: having formed a strong desire to possess a very pretty child, the daughter of one of his white tenants, he caused her to be stolen from her parents and brought to Genipapo; he kept her there under the same roof as his wife, who, of course, dared not complain, until she had borne him 2 children, when he either discovered her in an intrigue with a young man, who was upon a visit at the *engenbo*, or he fancied her guilty. He called 2 of his slaves and ordered them to dig a grave, and to put the girl into it: they dragged her out, but overcome by her tears, allowed her to escape. Upon their return, probably answering their master evasively, he ordered them to go with him and show him the body: it is needless to add that he discovered the fraud which had been practiced upon him, and caused the poor fellows to be castrated.

It is often urged, my Lord, that masters will not injure their slaves from motives of interest: the preceding story is an example of how much stronger some of the passions are in a man's mind than self-interest, and I will mention one other instance, as it has occurred very recently.

Some months since the owner of the *engenbo* Caga Fogo, was murdered, it was asserted, by a slave, who succeeded in escaping; the family used every exertion to apprehend him, and having expended Rs. 600 in these efforts, succeeded about a fortnight since. The present owner, Senhor Vieira, a man of notorious brutality, publicly invited his acquaintances to visit him last Sunday, for the purpose of seeing the man boiled alive in the sugar boiler of the estate; and although I cannot say that I have had this horror confirmed, the answer to all inquiries is, "if Vieira said so he will do it." The invitation was so public that the authorities had time for interference; they offered none. This man has also emasculated

many of his blacks, which is a favourite punishment with some proprietors.

I have here presented to your Lordship the best and the worst features of praedial slavery as they exist in this province. I fear that if there are not many proprietors to be found so brutal as Antonio Francisco de Rego Barros, or Vieira, there are still less to be met with so humane as Colonel Drummond. Upon the whole, it would be absurd to deny that there is no protection afforded by the laws to these people. They are kept in a state of the darkest ignorance; they are baptized for form's sake, but are never instructed in religion, and, no doubt, actually worship the images of the saints, as probably resembling their African gods; their daughters are always debauched when quite children; and their wives (if they are allowed them) only protected by the loss of beauty, brought on by the thousand ills they suffer. They are overworked. Who can deny it? If a well-fed horse is used for one-fourth of the time per day, that our ill-fed fellow men are worked, he will become a skeleton; and yet these people are worked 18 hours a day!

It is most monstrous, my Lord, and scarcely explicable how nature can support itself; but I verily believe that the degradations to which slavery gives rise in the majority of men actually destroys their intellect, their reason, and levels them with the brutes, leaving nothing more to direct and guide their actions than general instinct. Power being thus withdrawn from their reasoning faculties, it falls into their physical, and enables them to support treatment the most degrading, and sufferings the most acute, which under any other circumstances would annihilate them. They are ill-fed: even those few who have sufficient in quantity, would die, they could not live long upon the unwholesome and continual salt beef or fish, which is their unchangeable diet, were it not that they rob the precious limited hours allowed them for sleep, to catch rats or crabs for food, or, perhaps worse, become in secret dirt eaters, and die the most horrible of deaths. They are ill-clothed; let us take the most favourable part of my report, Colonel Drummond's property, where they have 2 suits a year: for the men, a shirt and a pair of trousers; for the women, a shift and a frock. Can persons, constantly hard at work, keep themselves clean with such a wardrobe, and in such a climate? The air is infected by the smell of their bodies, which has erroneously been attributed by ignorant prejudice to the colour of their skin; whereas I have often met with filthy white men in the tropics, with precisely the same disgusting odour; and on the contrary, in Pará, where the blacks are remarkably clean, the "catinga," as this smell is called, is almost unknown. They are denied many of the privileges of beasts, who are at least allowed to tend their young; these men are not. The birds pair at

will; these are prohibited, excepting at the will of a capricious master. They are not citizens; if they are denied natural and legal rights, it is not astonishing their political are withheld from them. In a word, my Lord, all the worst features of slavery exist in this province; the endeavour of the master is to suppress alike the intellect, the passions, and the senses of these poor creatures, and the laws aid them in transforming the African man into the American beast.

Dispatch of March 2, 1846

During the last two months I have carried into effect the intention expressed in my former reports of visiting the *Sertão*, or cotton and cattle districts, with a view of completing my reports upon the state of slavery in the province, from personal observation. I was accompanied by the French Consul, my colleague and intimate friend. We left [Recife] on the 21st of January, and passed through . . . numberless villages, reaching [the same city] once more on the 37th day of continued riding on horseback, having journeyed 305 leagues. . . .

I cannot avoid expressing to your Lordship my satisfaction that I determined upon undertaking this journey. I am confirmed in my determination never to adopt the dangerous course of offering information to Her Majesty's Government upon popular rumours or generally received opinions. . . . I am amply rewarded by being enabled to do justice to the kindest, most hospitable, and generous race of men that I ever met with. This applies equally to the upper and lower classes; the latter . . . were always ready to receive us; to share all they had with us; to show us all the attention which their means enabled them; and yet who never, under their trying and pitiable circumstances, purloined the most trifling thing which we possessed, and invariably refused the slightest remuneration for their trouble. They are also by far the finest race of men that I have seen in Brazil; . . . indeed they are always on horseback, and it is truly wonderful to see one of them in chase of cattle, at full gallop through the forests. . . . A people thus free themselves can scarcely be cruel to their slaves. Indeed at the *Fazendas de Gado*, or cattle estates, there exist very few, and those are employed in domestic services; at the *Fazendas de Algodão*, or cotton estates, there are more, but infinitely less than at the *engenbos*. There the most repulsive features of slavery are unknown; the Negroes are not overworked, and the women and children are employed separating the cotton from the seed, whilst the men turn the wheel of the machinery with which this is effected. Upon the whole I saw nothing revolting in the slavery of the *Sertão*, always excepting the fact of its existence.

2.6. Practical Advice on the Management of Plantation Slaves (1847)

Many Brazilian planters understood that the lives of many of their slaves were too short to yield them a profit, and that most plantation work forces did not grow by natural means. Nevertheless, even in the first half of the nineteenth century, when their labor needs were still supplied from Africa, they did not dispense with the customary wasteful methods of slave management which Andreoni deplored in the eighteenth century. (See Document 2.1.) All too often this meant excessive labor, inadequate nourishment, poor hygiene, and much physical brutality.

In 1847 Francisco Peixoto de Lacerda Werneck published a handbook intended to advise the planters of Rio de Janeiro province on the management of their estates. In the following selection from that work dealing with plantation slaves, the author pointed out some of the practices he had observed on the estates of fellow planters that reduced slave efficiency and shortened lives, suggesting other methods based in part upon operations on his own properties. Since Lacerda Werneck was himself a prominent coffee planter, since his handbook's purpose was to promote the fortunes of his fellow planters, and since it may be assumed that his own slaves enjoyed the "better" treatment that he recommended, this document constitutes a particularly believable inside look at plantation living conditions.

Source: Francisco Peixoto de Lacerda Werneck, *Memoria sobre a fundação e custeio de uma fazenda na provincia do Rio de Janeiro, sua administração e épocas em que se devem fazer as plantações, suas colheitas, etc., etc.* (Rio de Janeiro: Typographia Universal de Laemmert, 1847), pp. 16-18.

☛ The slaves should have Sundays and saints' days free. They should hear mass if it is available on the plantation, should know Christian doctrine, and confess annually. This is a restraining and controlling influence, especially if the confessor knows how to comply with his duty, and earnestly warns them to act morally, to behave well and with blind obedience to their masters, and to those who manage them.

On Sunday morning they should put on newly washed clothes, and the dirty ones should be put in a lye solution on Monday morning, and rinsed on Tuesday. If it rains and the slaves get wet, they should actually change clothes and hang up the wet ones in their quarters to be worn the following day, when they go out to work, keeping a clean set of clothes in reserve.

The planter should reserve a small plot of land as nearby as possible where the blacks can plant their gardens. Let them plant their own coffee, maize, beans, bananas, potatoes, yams, sweet cassava, etc. However, the planter should not allow them to sell their products to anyone else, but only to himself, and he should pay them a reasonable price, to prevent them from going astray and carousing in the taverns.

This money should be used for their tobacco, to buy special foods, fine clothing for their wives, if they are married, and for their children. Drunkenness, however, should be severely prohibited, and they should be put into the stocks until they have sobered up, and then be punished with 20 to 50 lashes.

Their gardens and what they produce in them cause them to acquire a certain love of the country, distract them a bit from slavery, and delude them into believing that they have a small right to property. Surely the planter will enrich his own soul with some satisfaction when he sees his slaves coming from their gardens carrying their boxes of bananas, yams, sugar cane, etc. Extreme discomfort dries up their hearts, hardens them, and inclines them to evil. The master should be severe, but just and humane.

When they are sick they should be treated with care and humanity. Even if there is an attending physician, the master should make his inspection of the infirmary to cheer the sick and give them relief, watching out for any negligence that may exist.

Nor should it be said that the black man is always the enemy of the master. This occurs only under two extreme conditions: either excessive severity, or too much leniency. The smallest excess on the part of an otherwise easygoing master makes them irritable, and too much severity brings them to a state of desperation.

There are also masters who have the very bad habit of not punishing on time, and who threaten the slave, telling him: "Wait and see, you will pay all at once."—or: "You are filling the bucket, which will overflow, and then we will see!" And when he is ready, he lays hold of the poor black man, and gives him a blow which all too often sends him to eternity. And why? Because he paid *all at once!!!* This is barbaric. The black man should be punished when he commits the offense. The punishment should fit the crime. The slave who is well corrected and punctually punished does not forget. Treat your slave with honorable and impartial justice, and, despite his brutishness, he will not fail to acknowledge it.

Do not send a childbearing black woman to the fields for a period of one year. Occupy her with household chores such as washing clothes, sorting coffee, and other work. After she has nurtured her child she

should then go to the fields, leaving her little one in the care of a general nurse, who should wash him, change his clothes and give him his meals.

The black fieldworker should eat three times a day. He should have breakfast at eight o'clock, lunch at one, and dinner from eight to nine. His food should be simple and healthful. In the uplands, generally, do not give him meat; he should eat beans, seasoned with salt and lard, and corn meal, which is a very substantial food. Manioc flour is weak and has little nutritional value. When by necessity I find myself forced to give them a constant diet of manioc flour mixed with beans, they begin to feel weak and melancholy, and they ask for corn meal; at such times the most I do is to give them one meal of manioc flour and beans, to two meals of corn flour.

Do not send your sick slave to work; if he has wounds, they should be completely healed before he returns to work. On some plantations I have seen blacks at work with large ulcers, and they even go into the fields unable to make full use of their limbs at the risk of dying or being permanently crippled. This practice, aside from being inhumane, is not in the interest of the owner.

Some time ago certain farmers adopted the custom of giving their slaves only two meals: breakfast at ten or eleven, and dinner at five in the afternoon. Such planters do not understand their own interests; [under such circumstances] their slaves can do far less work, and in addition their stomachs are ruined. How is it possible for a man or a woman (who is even weaker) to manage without food from five o'clock in the afternoon until ten or eleven the following day, performing rigorous labor with a hoe, scythe, or axe? They come to their food exhausted and then put too much food into their stomachs. They fall into a state of apathy, digestion becomes difficult, and soon they are sick. Instead of these two meals, I would suggest three, even if smaller: breakfast, lunch, and dinner, and at the hours suggested above. The digestive functions will be regularly established, and the slave will become more capable, more satisfied, and healthier, rather than weaker because of the lack of necessary food.