



This pro-Southern political cartoon was created to persuade anti-slavery Americans that U.S. slaves enjoyed a good life and, comparatively, were better-off than British workers.

People who viewed slavery, in this manner, tried to argue that it was a "positive good" since the "peculiar institution" provided food, clothing and shelter for African-Americans. Such an approach, of course, ignored the fact that American slaves (or their ancestors) were forcefully kidnapped / removed from their home countries, in Africa, then sent to the "New World" to work on Southern plantations.

The Library of Congress, which maintains a copy of this lithograph, provides [detailed information about it](#) (and the times during which it was created):

*Slavery as it exists in America.
Slavery as it exists in England.*

A challenge to the Northern abolitionist view of the institution of slavery, favorably contrasting the living conditions of American slaves (above) with the lot of the industrial poor in England (below).

The first scene is impossibly naive: Southern slaves dance and play as four gentlemen—two Northerners and two Southerners—observe.

First Northerner: "Is it possible that we of the North have been so deceived by false Reports? Why did we not visit the South before we caused this trouble between the North and South, and so much hard feelings amongst our friends at home?"

Southerner: "It is as a general thing, some few exceptions, after mine have done a certain amount of Labor which they finish by 4 or 5 P.M. I allow them to enjoy themselves in any reasonable way."

Second Southerner: "I think our Visitors will tell a different Story when they return to the North, the thoughts of this Union being dissolved is to [sic] dreadful a thing to be contemplated, but we must stand up for our rights let the consequence be as it may."

The second scene takes place outside a British textile factory. At left a well-dressed gentleman encounters a ragged, stooped figure, and asks, "Why my Dear Friend, how is it that you look so old? you know we were playmates when boys." The stooped figure responds, "Ah! Former we operatives are "fast men," and generally die of old age at Forty."

Behind them and to the right an emaciated mother laments over her ragged children, "Oh Dear! what wretched Slaves, this Factory Life makes me & my children." Nearby stand a fat cleric, holding a book of "Tythes," and an equally fat official holding "Taxes."

In the right foreground two barefoot youths converse. The first says, "I say Bill, I am going to run away from the Factory, and go to the Coal Mines where they have to work only 14 hours a Day instead of 17 as you do here." The second responds, "Oh! how I would like to have such a comfortable place. . ."

Near them another man sits forlorn on a rock, "Thank God my Factory Slavery will soon be over." In the distance a military camp is visible.

This dismal picture of the lives of the working class in manufacturing towns comes from Chapter V, Book Second, of Edward Lytton Bulwer's "England and the English," first published in 1833. In the lower margin is a portrait of "[George] Thompson the English Anti-Slavery Agitator" and the quote "I am proud to boast that Slavery does not breathe in England," with reference to "his speech at the African Church in Belknap St."

Thompson made a speaking tour of New York and New England in 1850-51.

Click on the image for a full-page view.

Credits:

This lithograph, on woven paper, published by J. Haven, Boston, circa 1850. Online via Library of Congress, reproduction number LC-USZ62-1285.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Slavery-As-It-Exists-in-America>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Slavery-As-It-Exists-in-America>