was possibly looked forward to with as much indifference as ordinary hired servants anticipate a removal from one employer to another.

While intending purchasers were proceeding with personal examinations of the several lots, I took the liberty of putting a few questions to the mother of the children. The following was our conversation :—

'Are you a married woman?'

'Yes, sir.'

'How many children have you had?'

'Seven.'

'Where is your husband?'

'In Madison county.'

'When did you part from him?'

'On Wednesday—two days ago.'

'Were you sorry to part from him?'

'Yes, sir,' she replied with a deep sigh ; 'my heart was a'most broke.'

'Why is your master selling you?'

'I don't know—he wants money to buy some land—suppose he sells me for that.'

There might not be a word of truth in these answers, for I had no means of testing their correctness; but the woman seemed to speak unreservedly, and I am inclined to think that she said nothing but what, if necessary, could be substantiated. I spoke, also, to the young woman who was seated near her. She, like the others, was perfectly black, and appeared stout and healthy, of which some of the persons present assured themselves by feeling her arms and ankles, looking into her mouth, and causing her to stand up. She told me she had several brothers and sisters, but did not know where they were. She said she was a house-servant and would be glad to be bought by a good master—looking at me, as if I should not be unacceptable.

I have said there was an entire absence of emotion in the party of men, women, and chilpren, thus seated preparatory to being sold. This does not correspond with the ordinary accounts of slave-sales, which are represented as tearful and harrowing. My belief is, that none of the parties felt deeply on the subject, or at least that any distress they experienced was but momentary—soon passed away, and was forgotten. One of my reasons for this opinion rests on a trifling incident which occurred. While waiting for the commencement of the sale, one of the gentlemen present amused himself with a pointer-dog, which, at command, stood on its hind-legs, and took pieces of bread from his pocket. These tricks greatly entertained the row of negroes, old and young ; and the poor woman, whose heart three minutes before was almost broken, now laughed as heartily as any one.

'Sale is going to commence—this way, gentlemen,' cried a man at the door to a number of loungers outside ; and all having assembled, the mulatto assistant led the woman and her children to the block, which he helped her to mount. There she stood with her infant at the breast, and one of her girls at each side. The auctioneer, a handsome, gentlemanly personage, took his place, with one foot on an old deal-chair with a broken back, and the other raised on the somewhat more elevated block. It was a striking scene.

'Well, gentlemen,' began the salesman, 'here is a capital woman and her three children, all in good health—what do you say for them? Give me an offer. (Nobody speaks.) I put up the whole lot at 850 dollars—850 dollars (speaking very fast)—850 dollars. Will no one advance upon that? A very extraordinary bargain, gentlemen. A fine healthy baby. Hold it up. (Mulatto goes up the first step of the block ; takes the baby from the woman's breast, and holds it aloft with one hand, so as to shew that it was a veritable sucking-baby.) That will do. A woman, still young, and three children, all for 850 dollars. An advance, if you please, gentlemen. (A voice bids 860.) Thank you, sir—860 ; any one bids more? (A second voice says, 870 ; and so on the bidding goes as far as 890 dollars, when it stops.) That won't do, gentlemen. I cannot take such a low price. (After a pause, addressing the mulatto) : She may go down.' Down from the block the woman and her children were therefore conducted by the assistant, and as if nothing had occurred, they calmly resumed their seats by the stove.

The next lot brought forward was one of the men. The mulatto beckoning to him with his hand, requested him to come behind a canvas screen, of two leaves, which was standing near the back-window. The man placidly rose, and having been placed behind the screen, was ordered to take off his clothes, which he did without a word or look of remonstrance. About a dozen gentlemen crowded to the spot while the poor fellow was stripping himself, and as soon as he stood on the floor, bare from top to toe, a most rigorous scrutiny of his person was instituted. The clear black skin, back and front, was viewed all over for sores from disease ; and there was no part of his body left unexamined. The man was told to open and shut his hands, asked if he could pick cotton, and every tooth in his head was scrupulously looked at. The investigation being at an end, he was ordered to dress himself ; and having done so, was requested to walk to the block.

The ceremony of offering him for competition was gone through as before, but no one would bid. The other two men, after undergoing similar examinations behind the screen, were also put up, but with the same result. Nobody would bid for them, and they were all sent back to their seats. It seemed as if the company had conspired not to buy anything that day. Probably some imperfections had been detected in the personal qualities of the negroes. Be this as it may, the auctioneer, perhaps a little out of temper from his want of success, walked off to his desk, and the affair was so far at an end.

'This way, gentlemen—this way!' was heard from a voice outside, andthe company immediately hived off to the second establishment. At this office there was a young woman, and also a man, for sale. The woman was put up first at 500 dollars ; and possessing some recommendable qualities, the bidding for her was run as high as 710 dollars, at which she was knocked down to a purchaser. The man, after the customary examination behind a screen, was put up at 700 dollars; but a small imperfection having been observed in his person, no one would bid for him ; and he was ordered down.

'This way, gentlemen—this way down the street, if you please!' was now shouted by a person in the employment of the first firm, to whose office all very willingly adjourned—one migratory company, it will be perceived, serving all the slave-auctions in the place. Mingling in the crowd, I went to see what should be the fate of the man and boy, with whom I had already had some communication.

There the pair, the two cousins, sat by the fire, just where I had left them an hour ago. The boy was put up first.

'Come along, my man—jump up ; there's a good boy!' said one of the partners, a bulky and respectable looking person, with a gold chain and bunch of seals ; at the same time getting on the block. With alacrity the little fellow came forward, and mounting the steps stood by his side. The forms in front were filled by the company ; and as I seated myself, I found that my old companion, Wide-awake, was close at hand, still chewing and spitting at a great rate.

'Now, gentlemen,' said the auctioneer, putting his hand on the shoulder of the boy, 'here is a very fine boy, seven years of age, warranted sound—what do you say for him? I put him up at 500 dollars—500 dollars (speaking quick, his right hand raised up, and coming down on the open palm of his left)—500 dollars. Any one say more than 500 dollars? (560 is bid.) 560 dollars. Nonsense! Just look at him. See how high he is. (He draws the lot in front of him, and shews that the little fellow's head comes up to his breast.) You see he is a fine, tall, healthy boy. Look at his hands.'

Several step forward, and cause the boy to open and shut his hands—the flexibility of the small fingers, black on the one side, and whitish on the other, being well looked to. The hands, and also the mouth, having given satisfaction, an advance is made to 570, then to 580 dollars.

'Gentlemen, that is a very poor price for a boy of this size. (Addressing the lot) : Go down, my boy, and shew them how you can run.'

The boy, seemingly happy to do as he was bid, went down from the block, and ran smartly across the floor several times ; the eyes of every one in the room following him.

'Now, that will do. Get up again. (Boy mounts the block, the steps being rather deep for his short legs ; but the auctioneer kindly lends him a hand.) Come, gentlemen, you see this is a first-rate lot. (590 – 600 — 610—620—630 dollars are bid.) I will sell him for 630 dollars. (Right hand coming down on left.) Last call. 630 dollars once—630 dollars twice. (A pause ; hand sinks.) Gone!'

The boy having descended, the man was desired to come forward ; and after the usual scrutiny behind a screen, he took his place on the block.

'Well, now, gentlemen,' said the auctioneer, 'here is a right prime lot. Look at this man ; strong, healthy, able-bodied ; could not be a better hand for field-work. He can drive a wagon, or anything. What do you say for him? I offer the man at the low price of 800 dollars—he is well worth 1200 dollars. Come, make an advance, if you please. 800 dollars said for the man (a bid), thank you ; 810 dollars—810 dollars 810 dollars (several bids)—820—830—850—860—going at 860—going. Gentlemen, this is far below his value. A strong boned man, fit for any kind of heavy work. Just take a look at him. (Addressing the lot) : Walk down. (Lot dismounts, and walks from one side of the shop to the other. When about to reascend the block, a gentleman, who is smoking a cigar, examines his mouth and his fingers. Lot resumes his place.) Pray, gentlemen, be quick (continues the auctioneer) ; I must sell him, and 860 dollars are only bid for the man—860 dollars, (A fresh run of bids to 945 dollars.) 945 dollars once, 945 dollars twice (looking slowly round, to see if all were done), 945 dollars, going—going (hand drops)—gone!'

During this remarkable scene, I sat at the middle of the front form with my note-book in my hand, in order to obtain a full view of the transaction. So strange was the spectacle, that I could hardly dispel the notion that it was all a kind of dream ; and now I look back upon the affair as by far the most curious I ever witnessed. The more intelligent Virginians will sympathise in my feelings on the occasion. I had never until now seen human beings sold ; the thing was quite new. Two men are standing on an elevated bench, one white and the other black. The white man is auctioning the black man. What a contrast in look and relative position! The white is a most respectable-looking person ; so far as dress is concerned, he might pass for a clergyman or church-warden. There he stands—can I believe my eyes?—in the might of an Anglo-Saxon, sawing the air with his hand, as if addressing a missionary or any other philanthropic meeting from a platform. Surely that gentlemanly personage cannot imagine that he is engaged in any mortal sin! Beside him is a man with a black skin, and clothed in rough garments. His looks are downcast and submissive. He is being sold, just like a horse at Tattersall's or a picture at Christie and Manson's—I must be under some illusion. That dark object, whom I have been always taught to consider a man, is not a man. True, he may be called a man in advertisements, and by the mouth of auctioneers. But it is only a figure of speech—a term of convenience. He is a man in one sense, and not in another. He is a kind of man—stands upright on two legs, has hands to work, wears clothes, can cook his food (a point not reached by monkeys), has the command of speech, and, in a way, can think and act like a rational creature—can even be taught to read. But nature has thought fit to give him a black skin, and that tells very badly against him. Perhaps, also, there is something wrong with his craniological development. Being, at all events, so much of a man—genus *homo*—is it quite fair to master him, and sell him, exactly as suits your convenience—you being, from a variety of fortunate circumstances, his superior? All this passed through my mind as I sat on the front form in the saleroom of Messrs ———, while one of the members of that well-known firm was engaged in pursuing, by the laws of Virginia, his legitimate calling.

Such were a forenoon's experiences in the slavemarket of Richmond. Everything is described precisely as it occurred, without passion or prejudice. It would not have been difficult to be sentimental on a subject which appeals so strongly to the feelings ; but I have preferred telling the simple truth. In a subsequent chapter, I shall endeavour to offer some general views of slavery in its social and political relations.

W. C.

FARMING IN CHINA.

A writer in *Blackwood's Magazine* speaks thus of agriculture in the Celestial Empire. The Chinese government has always fostered agriculture as peculiarly the national pursuit; and well has it repaid the imperial patronage. In a country nearly as large as all Europe, and far more densely peopled—containing, in fact, more than a third of the whole human race—more comfortable than any similar number of men on the face of the globe, no emigration has till now issued from its shores, and each new myriad of the rapidly-augmenting population has gone to increase the strength and resources of the State, while the invidious extremes of poverty and riches—that prime bane of old States—are there unknown, wealth being more equally divided than in any civilised country. Undisturbed in their little farms, the people are contented and cheerful; and with comparatively little commerce, and no manufactures—viewed as a distinct employment--the empire has continued for centuries thriving and unshaken by intestine commotions. The home consumers have maintained in comfort the home producers—the grand opening of new markets has been found in the increase of the population—the only emigration has been to the hill-side and the marsh. The French historian and philosopher Sismondi, maintains that the real bone and muscle of a nation is its agricultural population, and predicted the coming ruin of the older States of Europe from the evident decline of this class of their people; but whatever truth there may be in his opinion, no such state of matters is likely soon to sap the foundations of the Chinese Empire. There no millionaire manufactories, with machinery costing thirty or forty thousand pounds, overwhelm all competition, and, by ruining the small traders who ply the shuttle, as well as till the ground, draw starving thousands to Nankin, or Shanghae, feeding the towns to plethora, at the expense of the country, and accumulating from the labour of thousands gigantic fortunes for individuals. The small farmer rears his crop of rice, cotton or tea, dresses it, and sends it to market, and turns it to his own use as food or clothing, and, although he cannot succeed in laying by money, it is only in periods of famine or inundation that he experiences the pressure of want.

"There are few sights more pleasing," says Mr. Fortune, "than a Chinese family in the interior engaged in gathering the leaves of the tea-plant, or, indeed, in any of their agricultural pursuits. There is the old man—it may be the grandfather, or even the great-grand father—patriarch-like, directing his descendants, many of whom are in their youth and prime, while others are in their childhood, in the labours of the field. He stands in the midst of them, bowed down with age, but—to the honour of the Chinese, as a nation—he is always looked up to by all with pride and affection, and his old age and grey hairs are honored, revered, and loved."

In the tea districts every cottage or small farmer has his own little tea-garden, the produce of which supplies the wants of his family, and the surplus brings him in a few dollars, which procure for him the other necessaries of life. "When, after the labours of the day are over," says Mr. Fortune, "they return to their humble and happy homes, their fare consists chiefly of rice, fish, [with which their rivers abound,] and vegetables, which they enjoy with great zest, and are happy and contented. I really believe that there is no country in the world where the agricultural population are better off than they are in the north of China. Labour with them is pleasure, for its fruits are eaten by themselves, and the rod of the oppressor is unfelt and unknown. . . . For a few cash—1000 or 1200 make $1—a Chinese can dine in a sumptuous manner upon his rice, fish, vegetables, and tea; and I fully believe that in no country in the world is there less real misery and want than in China. The very beggars seem a kind jolly crew, and are kindly treated by the inhabitants."

THE RUSSIAN PRIESTHOOD.—"The following facts," says the *Paris Pays*, "will give an idea of the state of degradation into which the lower class of the Muscovite clergy has fallen. A Russian gentleman relates, that when passing one day through a village, he saw a number of peasants assembled, and stopped to enquire the cause. 'O,' replied one of them, 'It is only the priest, whom we are going to lock up in the barn., 'And why do you do that?' Because it is Saturday. The priest is a drunkard, and we always lock him up on a Saturday, in order that he may be in a condition to perform divine service on Sunday. On the Monday he is free to drink as he likes for the other days of the week.'"

USE OF BLACK GLOVES IN THE SUN.—If you put a black glove on one hand, and a white glove on the other, and hold them in the sun, the hand with the black glove will feel the hotter, but will not be scorched, while the hand with the white one, although it will be the cooler, will be burned by the sun. This is because the black absorbs the heat, it necessarily must let the heat pass through on to the hand and thus scorch it.

WHY A CLOUDY NIGHT IS WARMER THAN A CLEAR ONE.—A cloudy night is warmer than a clear one, because the clouds prevent the radiation of the heat from the earth, for which reason the surface of the ground continues to be warm.

DEATH-BED REVELATION.—A large wine dealer residing in London, recently on his death-bed, being in great distress of mind, acknowledged to his friends that his agony was occasioned by the nature of the business he had followed for years- He stated that it had been his habit to purchase all the sour wines he could, and by making use of sugar of lead and other deleterious substances, to restore the wine to a palatable taste. He said he did not doubt he had destroyed hundreds of lives, as he had from time to time noticed the effects of his mixtures on those who drank them. He had seen instances of this kind where the unconscious victims of cupidity, after wasting and declining for years, despite the best medical advice, went to their grave poisoned by the adulterated wines he had sold them.

I'm lost in grief!" as the fly said, when he was drowned in a lady's tear.

"Look on me, and weep!" as the onion said to the maid.

"Come out of the wet!" as the shark said to the young nigger, when he took him into his victualling office.

"Paying dear for good company!" as the rook said when he was put into the pigeon pie.