

die like beasts of the field. There are favored sections in which the poor servitude is less frightful, but, I repeat, there is not a community in the United States that would not ostracise the master who fed, clothed, and punished his slaves as heartlessly as the peons of Mexico—not excluding the fifty thousand in New Mexico—are fed, clothed and punished, and yet it is only a softened, outdoor imprisonment for debt!

The acquisition of New Mexico may—in the course of time must—not cure the Red Race within her limits from peon bondage, but to do it well and do it at once is the duty of Congress. Let it enact that peon servitude and imprisonment for debt shall not be permitted while the Territory is under the immediate pupillage of the General Government, and the system will be so broken up by the time the State comes of age and enters upon self government, that it will be impossible to return to it. There will be no legal imprisonment for debt if it is not enacted expressly to sustain peon servitude—and when that is swept away, the laborer may command more than twenty cents a day for his hire. He may then hope to earn a cow, a bit of land, a home in short, for love, and hope, and self-respect, and all the household virtues that ripen manhood, to nestle in and under their expanding light; and may learn to forget the unnumbered wrongs he has received from the Whites.

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LETTERS ON NEW-MEXICO.-NO. III.

Peonage.
Correspondence of The Tribune.
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While the South and the North—or rather the demagogues of the South and of the North—are ready to tear each other to pieces and destroy with unfilial hands the life of their great mother, the Union, about Slavery—which one defends as its especial interest, and the other attacks as an especial enemy—both overlook still higher interests and more immediate necessities. The South cannot recall its wasted advantages which it has thrown away—they are gone forever; but the North can now prove that principle—not a narrow sectional rivalry—is the motive power of its Anti Slavery incursions into Southern fields. If it is honest, truthful and wise, fifty thousand souls will rise out of bondage at its word. It is startling, is it not? to peculiarly accuse the North of endangering by its default the freedom of fifty thousand souls! Yet I make the accusation that while Northern statesmen loosened not a single rivet, hastened not by a day the final breaking of the chain of African bondage thereby, they have most carelessly periled the liberties of fifty thousand hapless Indians. Let the statement stand forth and so clearly read, that the danger may be averted, that the evil may be cured. If the friends of Humanity and Progress do not confine all their tenderness to their brethren of African descent, let them think and act with some directness and energy for the salvation of the thrice-wronged Red Race in New Mexico. There is yet time to save the Peons of that State from harsh bondage of indefinite duration.

I do not see the papers regularly, and have not even thought of following up the interminable Buncombeing of Congress, and it may have been stated, though I have not seen any correct definition of Peon servitude. *Peonage*, by the letter of the Mexican law, is merely the claiming of a man's personal services in payment of debt, if he has no other means to satisfy his creditor. This does not look so unreasonable on paper; if a man contracts debts he ought to pay them; and if he has nothing but his labor to give he should be willing to pay in labor. No one can say this reads so very hard and unjust; but in practice it is a base fraud on the liberty of the debtor and on the claims which his family and society (to whom he also owes his services) have the natural right to present with his other creditors.

It is but yesterday, as it were, that the oldest and most enlightened States abolished Imprisonment for Debt, and any of them have politically, the capacity to revive the old abuse. New Mexico, as a State in its minority, will be permitted to regulate its own domestic relations, and it has but to so word its statute that Peon Servitude takes the less distasteful name of Imprisonment for Debt. The Peon need not remain in servitude—not at all! he is perfectly free—free to starve in jail or work for his master, as before. It is true that for everything beyond his rations of a peck of corn a week, he must contract new debts; it is true that, for even his miserable blanket, often his entire wardrobe, for every dose of medicine if he is sick, for every pound of meat, he contracts new debts, and thus his cup of servitude is kept perpetually filled; but, after all, he is a free man; he may go to the prison, and be worked as a pauper there, if he does not like to work for his creditor. There is, (say the law-givers,) no injustice, no servitude in the case—it is only a fair, legal Imprisonment for Debt. And surely you are not so wickedly disrespectful of the laws as to dispute the power and equity of New Mexico if she chooses to enforce peon servitude on her fifty thousand homeless, landless Indians. Undoubtedly not; her right to regulate the laws on imprisonment for debt is as sound and complete as the right of Victoria to her throne, or of the State Church of England to deal out the measure of liberty allowed to the consciences of Jews and Catholics. New Mexico will henceforth have the power to continue peonage by making it imprisonment for debt. *Will she do so?* That is a question for the active, eloquent friends of Human Freedom to decide at the next meeting of Congress. As a part of Texas she would have had no such power, and her peon class—(probably two-thirds of her entire population)—must perforce, have walked forth from their chains. Let those who have given to the young Territory the power to legislate in independence, watch well that the power is not absolutely lent to the cause of servitude. On their consciences be the responsibility!

This evil of peon servitude, is the more difficult of cure, as the soil is held by a few large land-owners. The peon has no home or land whereon to begin independence. Think of one man owning sixty or a hundred square leagues of land, like some of the Armijos, Salazars and Trias family! The chief part of the soil is held in this way, and in some directions you may ride a whole day in a straight line on a single estate. These estates, larger than the largest Counties of New-York or New-England, are generally covered with herds and flocks that are counted by their owner by thousands and tens of thousands, and yet meat is not an every-day luxury with their peon servants. Each shepherd and herdsman is kept to a rigorous account of his charge. If there is a default, or a suspicion of default, the lash is not spared. These Mexican masters, who look heaven in the face and call themselves men, republicans and Christians, have less interest in their peons than the planter in his blacks.

The burning eye of Public Opinion is upon every American. He must feed, clothe and house his servants, and when they are old, maimed or helpless, he must still care for them, the law and his fellow-citizens will not let him escape the duty.—The Mexican master does neither, and nobody expects it of him. The scanty sustenance allowed by law would keep this side of starvation nothing but the Ishmaelites of the Desert, or their cousins, the Ishmaelites of the Desert. As for refinement, no city in the Union would tolerate for an hour in its streets such a spectacle of unbridled misery as these peons exhibit in their moral woe. When they can no longer work, they may live or starve as they see fit; they are turned out, like to