

Excerpt of a letter from Reverend Elijah Lovejoy to Reverend Asa Cummings of the *Christian Mirror*.
Sent from Alton, Illinois on 9 February 1837.

REV. E. P. LOVEJOY.

197

Dear brother, lay aside your metaphysical spectacles, give up your undue attachment to well-worded theories, and look at the naked facts. If the wisdom of the schools

17

198

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cannot teach you the true character of Slavery, come with me, and let us interrogate yonder illiterate, untaught slave. He is just returning, faint and weary, from the toils of the day. He is an aged man, and has had for many years, a practical acquaintance with Slavery. Let us hear his reply to the question, "What is Slavery?" "It is to have my back subjected to the cowhide or the cart whip, at the will or caprice of my master, or any of his family. Every child has a right to curse, or kick, or cuff the old man. It is to toil all day beneath an almost vertical sun, with the bitter certainty always before me, that not one cent of what I earn, is, or can be my own. It is to depart from my hut every morning, with the sickening fear, that before I return at night, it will be visited by the slave-driving fiend. It is to return at night, and find my worst fears realized. My first-born son, denied even the poor privilege of bidding his father farewell, is on his way, a chained and manacled victim, to a distant market, there to be disposed of in shambles, where human flesh and sinews are bought and sold. It is to enter my cabin, and see my wife or daughter struggling in the lustful embraces of my master, or some of his white friends, without daring to attempt their rescue; for should I open my lips to remonstrate, a hundred lashes would be the consequence; and should I raise my hand to smite the brutal wretch, nothing but death could atone for the sacrilege. But above all, to be a slave, is to be denied the privilege of reading the gospel of the Son of God, to have no control over my own children, and, consequently to be deprived of the power and means of educating them in the principles of morality and religion. In one word, it is to be degraded from a man to a brute—to become, instead of a free moral agent, a THING, a piece of property, and to be used as such—to be deprived of all personal and all

REV. E. P. LOVEJOY.

199

civil rights—to be shut out from all enjoyment in this world, and all hope in the next."