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by Anonymous

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**ANONYMOUS**

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VOL. VI

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## *Slavery in \* \* \** *Ulster County*

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PANIARDS had no sooner formed settlements on the islands of the West Indies after the discoveries of Columbus than they enslaved the inhabitants and set them at work in the mines. When the native tribes had been swept away the question of laborers became more and more pressing, and the west coast of Africa was drawn upon to supply the demand for slaves. Thus came about the curse of African slavery in America. We propose to inquire how great a factor it was in Old Ulster.

A Dutch man-of-war brought to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619 the first African slaves carried to the North American colonies. The number was twenty. This vessel had captured a Spanish slave ship and thus disposed of part of its cargo. Seven years thereafter, in 1626, African slaves were introduced into the Dutch

colony of New Amsterdam. During the next two hundred years slavery existed here under Dutch and English domination until the Revolution. After the formation of the State government in 1777 slavery continued for fifty years and was finally abolished in 1827, except that a few slaves remained in bondage for a few years until they had reached a certain age.

It is not known how early in the settlement of Old Ulster the institution of slavery took root within its bounds. But it is known that negroes were here from the earliest recorded years. They are mentioned almost as early as the Indian troubles begin in statements as to the number of men who could be found to defend the settlement aside from the negroes. Among the killed at the Indian attack upon the settlement at the Esopus June 7th, 1663, was a slave of Thomas Chambers. The records of the local court of Wildwyck contain many references to the holding, the ownership, the sale and the conduct of the slaves of the Esopus.

There is nothing upon record to show that Indians were held as slaves in the Esopus. This magazine (Vol. I., page 199) has spoken of the sale by Stuyvesant of the Indian captives, May 25th, 1660, at the close of the First Esopus Indian War, to strike terror into the hearts of the red men. These were sent to the West Indies to be sold. There is nothing on record to show that Indians were thus enslaved in the colony of New Netherland. After the English domination the Council Minutes for 1679 contain this resolution:

“All Indians within the colony are free—nor can they be forced to be servants or slaves—and if they are brought



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hither as slaves, a residence of 6 months shall entitle them to freedom."

This rule was violated frequently in after years. The census often speaks of "Indian and Negro Slaves." Yet there seems to have been no sale of Indian slaves unless Indian and Negro blood was amalgamated. It is on record that negroes ran away and were secreted by the Minisinks and intermarried, especially the negro women with the Indian braves. When the children of such were found they were claimed by the masters of such women. There is evidence that Indian women voluntarily bound themselves to become servants to white men. But there seems none that Indians were thus sold by their owners. It is highly improbable that any men or women of the proud and belligerent Iroquois were ever held in slavery.

It has just been said that the Dutch brought the first slaves to New Amsterdam in 1626. It is not known how great the number was. There were at least eleven men, aside from the women. In 1644 one of these, Paul de Angola, with ten others named, petitioned the West India Company to be liberated. The Director and Council granted their request, requiring each of the negroes to be freed to pay the company each year as long as he lived thirty "skepels" (22½ bushels) of grain and "one fat hog." Their children were to continue to serve the company as slaves.

When the West India Company began to colonize New Netherland the question of labor became a pressing one. Inducements held out to families in the Netherlands to go out to New Netherland as farm

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laborers brought few responses. The fertility of the virgin soil was not disputed, but the Netherlands, at peace after the long war, was too thriving a hive of industry and offered too great a return to labor to have it enticed away to a distant land that had to be subdued and cleared before it would yield a return to the farmer.

So, in 1644, it was reported that the request of the Patroons for the introduction from Brazil

“Of as many Negroes as they would be disposed to pay for at a fair price; which Negroes would accomplish more work for their masters, and at a less expense, than farm servants, who must be bribed to go thither by a great deal of money and promises.”

It was difficult to get the farmers to buy the slaves that were imported. These slaves were owned by the West India Company and hired out to the farmers. Individuals disliked to become the owners of the slaves. On May 27th, 1647 the Chamber of Accounts of the West India Company reported :

“Nevertheless, if slaves are to be properly treated, they must have their particular owners each of whom undertakes colonies, plantations and farms according to his circumstances and means, and endeavors by slave labor to derive therefrom, either for immediate support or for exportation, whatever can be a source of profit.”

In 1649 the “Deputies from New Netherland” remonstrated to the States-General of the United Netherlands that the children of the manumitted slaves, spoken of above, were still in bondage

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“Contrary to all public law, that any one born of a free Christian mother should, notwithstanding, be a slave, and obliged so to remain.”

In the reply to the remonstrance the West India Company says :

“Not more than three are in service viz., one, which Stuyvesant has with him on the Companie's bouwerie; one at the house, the Hope; one wench with Martin Krigier, who hath reared her from a little child, at his own expense.”

In 1664 the English seized the province. The mild type of slavery which existed under the Dutch gave way to a much more onerous servitude. There was in England a corporation named “The Royal African Company” engaged in the African slave trade. The president of this company was the Duke of York who had been granted the province of New York by the King, Charles II. So James was directly engaged in the slave trade. Williams’ “History of the Negro Race” thus speaks of the change for the worse which followed :

“Most of the slaves in the province of New York, from the time when they were first introduced, down to 1664 had been the property of the West India Company. As such they had small plots of land to work for their own benefit, and were not without hope of emancipation some day. But under the English government the condition of the slave was clearly defined by law and one of great hardships.”

The English government professed to attempt to mitigate the conditions of the negroes in bondage and civilize and Christianize them. As early as 1660 they