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## 32. Maria Perkins Writes of the Sale of Her Child

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Beyond the economic forces that encouraged the domestic slave traffic lay the human sorrow of slaves whose families could be—and were—parted for so many causes: the failure of the planter, the spite of a jealous wife, misbehavior of a stubborn slave, or simple profit. Although the open condemnation of shocked white persons is often registered, it is seldom that the historian finds recorded the personal emotion of the *victims* of the internal slave trade. The following letter from a slave mother to her husband is an exception. Mrs. Perkins was naturally more alarmed at the prospect of being bought by a trader who might sell her far from home and family, than if he were a local person. Scottsville, mentioned in the letter, is a small town very near Charlottesville. Staunton is over the mountains and some forty miles farther away.

Maria Perkins to Richard Perkins

Charlottesville, Oct. 8th, 1852.

Dear Husband I write you a letter to let you know my distress my master has sold albert to a trader on Monday court day and myself and other child is for sale also and I want you to let [me] hear from you very soon before next court if you can I don't know when I don't want you to wait till Christmas I want you to tell dr Hamelton and your master if either will buy me they can attend to it know and then I can go afterwards. I don't want a trader to get

me they asked me if I had got any person to buy me and I told them no they took me to the court house too they never put me up a man buy the name of brady bought albert and is gone I don't know where they say he lives in Scottesville my things is in several places some is in staunton and if I should be sold I don't know what will become of them I don't expect to meet with the luck to get that way till I am quite heartsick nothing more I am and ever will be your kind wife Maria Perkins.

To Richard Perkins.

Source: Ulrich B. Phillips, ed., *Life and Labor in the Old South* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1929), p. 212.