DANIEL PARISH KIDDER (1815–1891) AND JAMES COOLEY FLETCHER (1823–1901)
BRAZIL AND THE BRAZILIANS (1857)

The subject of slavery in Brazil is one of great interest and hopefulness. The Brazilian Constitution recognises, neither directly nor indirectly, color as a basis of civil rights; hence, once free, the black man or the mulatto, if he possess energy and talent, can rise to a social position from which his race in North America is debarred. Until 1850, when the slave-trade was effectually put down, it was considered cheaper, on the country-plantations, to use up a slave in five or seven years and purchase another, than to take care of him. This I had, in the interior, from intelligent native Brazilians, and my own observation has confirmed it. But, since the inhuman traffic with Africa has ceased, the price of slaves has been enhanced, and the selfish motives for taking greater care of them have been increased. Those in the city are treated better than those on the plantations: they seem more cheerful, more full of fun, and have greater opportunities for freeing themselves. But still there must be great cruelty in some cases, for suicides among slaves—which are almost unknown in our Southern States—are of very frequent occurrence in the cities of Brazil.

In Brazil everything is in favour of freedom; and such are the facilities for the slave to emancipate himself, and, when emancipated, if he possess the proper qualifications, to ascend to higher eminences than those of a mere free black, that *fuit* [sum] will be written against slavery in this Empire before another half-century rolls around. Some of the most intelligent men that I met with in Brazil—men educated at Paris and Coimbra—were of African descent, whose ancestors were slaves. Thus, if a man have freedom, money, and merit, no matter how black may be his skin, no place in society is refused him. It is surprising to observe the ambition and the advancement of some of these men with negro blood in their veins. . . . It must, however, be admitted that there is a certain—though by no means strong—prejudice existing all over the land in favour of men of pure white descent.

In some intestate cases, a slave may go before a magistrate, have his price fixed, and purchase himself; and I was informed that a man of mental endowments, even if he had been a slave, would be debarred from no official station, however high, unless it might be that of Imperial Senator.

The appearance of Brazilian slaves is very different from that of their class in our own country. Of course, the house-servants in the large cities are decently clad, as a general rule; but even these are almost always barefooted. This is a sort of badge of slavery. . . . The appearance of the black male population who live in the open air is anything but appetizing. Their apology for dress is of the coarsest and dirtiest description. Hundreds of them loiter about the streets with large round wicker-baskets ready to carry any parcel.

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Slavery is doomed in Brazil. As has already been exhibited, when freedom is once obtained, it may be said in general that no social hindrances, as in the United States, can keep down a man of merit. Such hindrances do exist in our country. From the warm

regions of Texas to the coldest corner of New England the free black man, no matter how gifted, experiences obstacles to his elevation which are insurmountable. Across that imaginary line which separates the Union from the possessions of Great Britain, the condition of the African, socially considered, is not much superior. The Anglo-Saxon race, on this point, differs essentially from the Latin nations. The former may be moved to generous pity for the negro, but will not yield socially. The latter, both in Europe and the two Americas, have always placed merit before color.

Taken from Daniel Parish Kidder and James Cooley Fletcher, *Brazil and the Brazilians*, 6th ed. (London: Sampson Low, Son, and Marston, 1866), 132–134, 138.