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Slavery: Review of Slavery in the United States and The South Vindicated from the Treason and Fanaticism of the Northern Abolitionists

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SLAVERY.

Slavery in the United States. By J. K. Paulding. New York: Harper and Brothers.

The South Vindicated from the Treason and Fanaticism of the Northern Abolitionists. Philadelphia: Published by H. Manly.

It is impossible to look attentively and understandingly on those phenomena that indicate public sentiment in regard to the subject of these works, without deep and anxious interest. "*Nulla vestigia retrorsum,*" is a saying fearfully applicable to what is called the "march of mind." It is unquestionable truth. The absolute and palpable impossibility of ever unlearning what we know, and of returning, even by forgetfulness, to

the state of mind in which the knowledge of it first found us, has always afforded flattering encouragement to the hopes of him who dreams about the perfectibility of human nature. Sometimes one scheme, and sometimes another is devised for accomplishing this great end; and these means are so various, and often so opposite, that the different experiments which the world has countenanced would seem to contradict the maxim we have quoted. At one time human nature is to be elevated to the height of perfection, by emancipating the mind from all the restraints imposed by Religion. At another, the same end is to be accomplished by the universal spread of a faith, under the benign influence of which every son of Adam is to become holy, "even as God is holy." One or the other of these schemes has been a cardinal point in every system of perfectibility which has been devised since the earliest records of man's history began. At the same time the progress of knowledge (subject indeed to occasional interruptions) has given to each successive experiment a seeming advantage over that which preceded it.

But it is lamentable to observe, that let research discover, let science teach, let art practice what it may, man, in all his mutations, never fails to get back to some point at which he has been before. The human mind seems to perform, by some invariable laws, a sort of cycle, like those of the heavenly bodies. We may be unable, (and, for ourselves, we profess to be so) to trace the *causes* of these changes; but we are not sure that an accurate observation of the history of various nations at different times, may not detect the *laws* that govern them. However eccentric the orbit, the comet's place in the heavens enables the enlightened astronomer to anticipate its future course, to tell when it will pass its perihelion, in what direction it will shoot away into the unfathomable abyss of infinite space, and at what period it will return. But what especially concerns us, is to mark its progress through our planetary system, to determine whether in coming or returning it may infringe upon us, and prove the messenger of that dispensation which, in the end of all things, is to wrap our earth in flames.

Not less eccentric, and far more deeply interesting to us, is the orbit of the human mind. If, as some have supposed, the comet in its upward flight is drawn away by the attraction of some other sun, around which also it bends its course, thus linking another system with our own, the analogy will be more perfect. For while man is ever seen rushing with uncontrollable violence toward one or the other of his opposite extremes, fanaticism and irreligion—at each of these we find placed an attractive force identical in its nature and in many of its effects. At each extreme, we find him influenced by the same prevailing interest—devoting himself to the accomplishment of the same great object. Happiness is his purpose. The sources of that, he may be told, are within himself—but his eye will fix on the external means, and these he will labor to obtain. Foremost among these, and the equivalent which is to purchase all the rest, is property. At this all men aim, and their eagerness seems always proportioned to the excitement, which, from whatever cause, may for the time prevail. Under such excitement, the many who want, band themselves together against the few that possess; and the lawless appetite

of the multitude for the property of others calls itself the spirit of liberty.

In the calm, and, as we would call it, the healthful condition of the public mind, when every man worships God after his own manner, and Religion and its duties are left to his conscience and his Maker, we find each quietly enjoying his own property, and permitting to others the quiet enjoyment of theirs. Under that state of things, those modes and forms of liberty which regulate and secure this enjoyment, are preferred. Peace reigns, the arts flourish, science extends her discoveries, and man, and the sources of his enjoyments, are multiplied. But in this condition things never rest. We have already disclaimed any knowledge of the causes which forbid this—we only know that such exist. We know that men are always passing, with fearful rapidity, between the extremes of fanaticism and irreligion, and that at either extreme, property and all the governmental machinery provided to guard it, become insecure. "Down with the Church! Down with the Altar!" is at one time the cry. "Turn the fat bigots out of their styes, sell the property of the Church and give the money to the poor!" "Behold our turn cometh," says the Millenarian. "The kingdoms of this world are about to become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ. Sell what you have and give to the poor, and let all things be in common!"

It is now about two hundred years since this latter spirit showed itself in England with a violence and extravagance which accomplished the overthrow of all the institutions of that kingdom. With that we have nothing to do; but we should suppose that the striking resemblance between the aspect of a certain party in that country then and now, could hardly escape the English statesman. Fifty years ago, in France, this eccentric comet, "public sentiment," was in its opposite node. Making allowance for the difference in the characters of the two people, the effects were identical, the apparent causes were the opposites of each other. In the history of the French Revolution, we find a sort of symptomatic phenomenon, the memory of which was soon lost in the fearful exacerbation of the disease. But it should be remembered now, that in that war against property, the first object of attack was property in slaves; that in that war on behalf of the alleged right of man to be discharged from all control of law, the first triumph achieved was in the emancipation of slaves.

The recent events in the West Indies, and the parallel movement here, give an awful importance to these thoughts in our minds. They superinduce a something like despair of success in any attempt that may be made to resist the attack on all our rights, of which that on Domestic Slavery (the basis of all our institutions) is but the precursor. It is a sort of boding that may belong to the family of superstitions. All vague and undefined fears, from causes the nature of which we know not, the operations of which we cannot stay, are of that character. Such apprehensions are alarming in proportion to our estimate of the value of the interest endangered; and are excited by every thing which enhances that estimate. Such apprehensions have been awakened in our minds by the books before us. To Mr. Paulding, as a Northern man, we tender our grateful thanks for the faithful picture he has drawn of slavery as it appeared to him in his visit to the South, and as exhib-

bited in the information he has carefully derived from those most capable of giving it. His work is executed in the very happiest manner of an author in whom America has the greatest reason to rejoice, and will not fail to enhance his reputation immeasurably as a writer of pure and vigorous English, as a clear thinker, as a patriot, and as a man. *The other publication, which we take to be from a Southern pen, is more calculated to excite our indignation against the calumnies which have been put forth against us, and the wrongs meditated by those who come to us in the names of our common Redeemer and common country—seeking our destruction under the mask of Christian Charity and Brotherly Love. This too is executed with much ability, and may be read with pleasure as well as profit. While we take great pleasure in recommending these works to our readers, we beg leave to add a few words of our own. We are the more desirous to do this, because there is a view of the subject most deeply interesting to us, which we do not think has ever been presented, by any writer, in as high relief as it deserves. We speak of the moral influences flowing from the relation of master and slave, and the moral feelings engendered and cultivated by it. A correspondent of Mr. Paulding's justly speaks of this relation as one partaking of the patriarchal character, and much resembling that of clanship. This is certainly so. But to say this, is to give a very inadequate idea of it, unless we take into consideration the peculiar character (I may say the peculiar nature) of the negro. Let us reason upon it as we may, there is certainly a power, in causes inscrutable to us, which works essential changes in the different races of animals. In their physical constitution this is obvious to the senses. The color of the negro no man can deny, and therefore, it was but the other day, that they who will believe nothing they cannot account for, made this manifest fact an authority for denying the truth of holy writ. Then comes the opposite extreme—they are, like ourselves, the sons of Adam, and must therefore, have like passions and wants and feelings and tempers in all respects. This, we deny, and appeal to the knowledge of all who know. But their authority will be disputed, and their testimony falsified, unless we can devise something to show how a difference might and should have been brought about. Our theory is a short one. It was the will of God it should be so. But the means—how was this effected? We will give the answer to any one who will develop the causes which might and should have blackened the negro's skin and crisped his hair into wool. Until that is done, we shall take leave to speak, as of things *in esse*, of a degree of loyal devotion on the part of the slave to which the white man's heart is a stranger, and of the master's reciprocal feeling of parental attachment to his humble dependant, equally incomprehensible to him who drives a bargain with the cook who prepares his food, the servant who waits at his table, and the nurse who doses over his sick bed. That these sentiments in the breast of the negro and his master, are stronger than they would be under like circumstances between individuals of the white race, we believe. That they belong to the class of feelings "by which the heart is made better," we know. How come they? They have their rise in the relation between the infant and the nurse. They are cultivated*

between him and his foster brother. They are cherished by the parents of both. They are fostered by the habit of affording protection and favors to the younger offspring of the same nurse. They grow by the habitual use of the word "my," used as the language of affectionate appropriation, long before any idea of value mixes with it. It is a term of endearment. That is an easy transition by which he who is taught to call the little negro "his," in this sense and *because he loves him*, shall love him *because he is his*. The idea is not new, that our habits and affections are reciprocally cause and effect of each other.

But the great teacher in this school of feeling is sickness. In this school we have witnessed scenes at which even the hard heart of a thorough bred philanthropist would melt. But here, we shall be told, it is not humanity, but interest that prompts. Be it so. Our business is not with the cause but the effect. But is it interest, which, with assiduous care, prolongs the life of the aged and decrepid negro, who has been, for years, a burthen? Is it interest which labors to rear the crippled or deformed urchin, who can never be any thing but a burthen—which carefully feeds the feeble lamp of life that, without any appearance of neglect, might be permitted to expire? Is not the feeling more akin to that parental *σφοδρῆ*, which, in defiance of reason, is most careful of the life which is, all the time, felt to be a curse to the possessor. Are such cases rare? They are as rare as the occasions; but let the occasion occur, and you will see the case. How else is the longevity of the negro proverbial? A negro who does no work for thirty years! (and we know such examples) is it interest which has *lengthened out his existence*?

Let the philanthropist think as he may—by the negro himself, his master's care of him in sickness is not imputed to interested feelings. We know an instance of a negress who was invited by a benevolent lady in Philadelphia to leave her mistress. The lady promised to secrete her for a while, and then to pay her good wages. The poor creature felt the temptation and was about to yield. "You are mighty good, madam," said she "and I am a thousand times obliged to you. And if I am sick, or any thing, I am sure you will take care of me, and nurse me, like my good mistress used to do, and bring me something warm and good to comfort me, and tie up my head and fix my pillow." She spoke in the simplicity of her heart, and the tempter had not the heart to deceive her. "No," said she "all *that* will come out of your wages—for you will have money enough to hire a nurse." The tears had already swelled into the warm hearted creature's eyes, at her own recital of her mistress's kindness. They now gushed forth in a flood, and running to her lady who was a lodger in the house, she threw herself on her knees, confessed her fault, was pardoned, and was happy.

But it is not by the bedside of the sick negro that the feeling we speak of is chiefly engendered. They who would view it in its causes and effects must see him by the sick bed of his master—must see *her by the sick bed of her mistress*. We have seen these things. We have seen the dying infant in the lap of its nurse, and have stood with the same nurse by the bed side of her own dying child. Did mighty nature assert her empire, and wring from the mother's heart more and bitterer tears than she had shed over her foster babe? None that

the eye of man could distinguish. And he who sees the heart—did he see dissimulation giving energy to the choking sobs that *seemed* to be rendered more vehement by her attempts to repress them? *Philanthropy* may think so if it pleases.

A good lady was on her death bed. Her illness was long and protracted, but hopeless from the first. A servant, (by no means a favorite with her, being high tempered and ungovernable) was advanced in pregnancy, and in bad health. Yet she could not be kept out of the house. She was permitted to stay about her mistress during the day, but sent to bed at an early hour every night. Her reluctance to obey was obvious, and her master found that she evaded his order, whenever she could escape his eye. He once found her in the house late at night, and kindly reproving her, sent her home. An hour after, suddenly going out of the sick room, he stumbled over her in the dark. She was crouched down at the door, listening for the groans of the sufferer. She was again ordered home, and turned to go. Suddenly she stopped, and bursting into tears, said, "Master it aint no use for me to go to bed, Sir. It don't do me no good, I cannot sleep, Sir."

Such instances prove that in reasoning concerning the moral effect of slavery, he who regards man as a unit, the same under all circumstances, leaves out of view an important consideration. The fact that he is not so, is manifest to every body—but the application of the fact to this controversy is not made. The author of "The South Vindicated" quotes at page 228, a passage from Lamartine, on this very point, though he only uses it to show the absurdity of any attempt at amalgamation. The passage is so apt to our purpose that we beg leave to insert it.

The more I have travelled, the more I am convinced that the races of men form the great secret of history and manners. Man is not so capable of education as philosophers imagine. The influence of governments and laws has less power, radically, than is supposed, over the manners and instincts of any people, while the primitive constitution and the blood of the race have always their influence, and manifest themselves, thousands of years afterwards, in the physical formations and moral habits of a particular family or tribe. Human nature flows in rivers and streams into the vast ocean of humanity; but its waters mingle but slowly, sometimes never; and it emerges again, like the Rhone from the Lake of Geneva, with its own taste and color. Here is indeed an abyss of thought and meditation, and at the same time a grand secret for legislators. As long as they keep the spirit of the race in view they succeed; but they fail when they strive against this natural predisposition: nature is stronger than they are. This sentiment is not that of the philosophers of the present time, but it is evident to the traveller; and there is more philosophy to be found in a caravan journey of a hundred leagues, than in ten years' reading and meditation.

There is much truth here, though certainly not what passes for truth with those who study human nature wholly in the closet, and in reforming the world address themselves exclusively to the faults of *others*, and the evils of which they know the least, and which least concern themselves.

We hope the day has gone by when we are to be judged by the testimony of false, interested, and malignant accusers alone. We repeat that we are thankful to Mr. Paulding for having stepped forward in our defence. Our assailants are numerous, and it is indis-

pensable that we should meet the assault with vigor and activity. Nothing is wanting but manly discussion to convince our own people at least, that in continuing to command the services of their slaves, they violate no law divine or human, and that in the faithful discharge of their reciprocal obligations lies their true duty. Let these be performed, and we believe (with our esteemed correspondent Professor Dew) that society in the South will derive much more of good than of evil from this much abused and partially-considered institution.