1836

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.


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

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 so often opposite, that the different experiments which the world has conmented would seem to compete, the maxim we have quoted. At one time human nature is to be elevated to the height of perfection, by emanating the mind from all the restraints imposed by Religion. As 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 given to each successive experiment a seeming advantage over that which preceded it. But it is in vain, let that research discover, let science teach, let art practice what it may, man, in all his mutations, never wishes to get back to the same point at which he has been before. The human mind seems to perform, by some invariable laws, a species of cyclical, 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. How eccentric the orbit, the maxim was soon lost in the fearful exacerbation of the disease.

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 bodes 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—divorcing 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 whose egotism 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 the faithful picture he has drawn of sin, every as it appeared to him in his visit to the South, and as exhibi-
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 Americ

ian 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, was intended 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 deserv

es. 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 chivalry. 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 see 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. Thus, we are driven 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 is the simplicity of her soul, 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 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 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 bitter tears than she had shed over her foster babe? None that
the eye of man could distinguish. And he who sees the
hearts—did he see dissimulation giving energy to the
choking sobs that seemed to be rendered more vehement by
her efforts 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 ser-
vant, (by no means a favorite with her, being high tem-
pered and unoverflowably) 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 mis-
tress 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 suf-
ferer. She was again ordered home, and turned to go.
Suddenly she stopped, and bursting into tears, said,
"Master it is no use for me to go to bed, Sir. 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 amal-
gamation. 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 philo-
sophers imagine. The influence of governments and
laws has less power, radically, than is supposed, ovel'
the manners and instincts of any people, while the primi-
tive 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 hu-
manity; 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 pre-
disposition: 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 hun-
dred 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 con-
cern themselves.

We hope the day has gone by when we are to be
judged by the testimony of false, interested, and malig-
nant accusers alone. We repeat that we are thankful
to Mr. Paulding for having stepped forward in our de-

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