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An Essay on the Moral and Political Effect of the Relation Between the Caucasian Master and the African Slave

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AN ESSAY

On the Moral and Political Effect of the Relation between

THE CAUCASIAN MASTER AND THE AFRICAN SLAVE.

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Gentlemen: I am not sure but that some may think that I owe an apology for introducing the subject to which I invite your attention. Did I propose to treat it in the angry and contentious spirit it so often excites, no apology ought to be received. I beg leave to assure you, in advance, that I have no such purpose. The subject is one intimately connected with the happiness and the duties of a large portion of the inhabitants of the United States. It is at least important that *they* should understand it rightly. These, on their part, have reason to wish, that they whom it does not so immediately concern, and who judge of it at a distance, should see it in its true light. The love of reputation is natural to man, and it is not easy for any one to sit down under the reproach of the world, entirely satisfied with the judgment of his own conscience. This indeed is indispensable, but this is not all.

In this assembly, devoted to the cause of science,

the discussion of a subject connected with the two important sciences of Government and Morality can not be out of place. In a catholic association intended to harmonize the feelings and judgments of those who have so much in common, it is desirable that every thing possible should be done to convince all of the wisdom and justice of opinions and conduct which, though confined to a part, that part can not be expected to change. In an association intended to collect, as in a focus, the light emanating from every part of this extensive Union, it would seem the duty of each to bring forward his ideas on subjects which he most particularly understands, and these are the very subjects to which others, possessing less means of knowledge may be expected to give the most willing attention.

In an assembly, so enlightened as this, I should not presume to open my lips on a subject of general science. To attempt it, would be but to give back to the sun a dim reflection of his own light. And this society itself—what is it, but a member of that great society of scientific men throughout Christendom, which is in perpetual session for the discovery of truth, and for so disseminating it, as to make the knowledge of each the knowledge of all? It is true that the sun of science has but lately risen on this Western world; and it is not to be expected that much will be discovered here in departments which the learned of Europe have been long exploring, with all the advantages that we possess. Although something of this sort has occasionally been accomplished, yet Europe may be expected to look coldly and discouragingly on such researches. The praise due for discoveries and improvements actually made has been grudgingly awarded. But let us speak of what is peculiar to our own country and straightway the jealousy of our European masters in art and science is appeased, and the most learned are the most ready to become our pupils, and to increase their ample stores of knowledge from our authentic materials. Cuvier himself would take instruction from the illiterate miner, and draw from his facts conclusions to elucidate the great marvel of CREATION.

To the great marts of science, where its votaries congregate for the exchange of knowledge for knowledge and thought for thought, each man should come freighted with that which his own country yields, and especially that which can not be found elsewhere. Should there appear among us an inhabitant of the interesting but unknown country of Oregon, professing to tell us of its soil and climate, its streams, mountains and minerals, we should listen with patient interest to all he might say concerning these, though, on any other subject, his best thoughts might be unworthy of notice. In like manner, gentlemen, I, who, on any other topic but that I have selected, should sit in the place of a learner, venture respectfully to claim the attention of this enlightened assembly to what I shall offer, concerning the great moral and political phenomenon which forms the striking and peculiar feature in the character and history of some of the States of this Union.

I am aware I may be met with the sound legal maxim, "*Nemo in propria causa Judex.*" But my business is to reason and to testify—not to decide. Reason stands for itself resting on its own strength; and in an assembly like this we owe it to each other to receive testimony as true, and even judgment as candid. Why should it be otherwise? No claim of right, no interest is involved in any discussion here. Elsewhere, unfortunately, this is not the case. In the only other place where this topic can be discussed between those among whom the institution of domestic slavery exists, and those who are strangers to it, it is so blended with questions of political power and individual interest, that it is always a subject of altercation, and not discussion. Do not the very bitterness it excites, the angry crimination, the fierce recrimination it provokes, demand a calm and candid investigation of its real merits? Shall I not stand excused for offering the results of a life's experience and reflection on a subject so differently understood by those who, it is to be wished, may be brought to see it in the same light? Shall I be blamed for offering to pour oil upon the wave which is beating against the foundations of the Union, and threatens to wash it from its base? The empire of opinion has its tribunals before which all are liable to be arraigned, and none should deny their jurisdiction, who do not desire to see that mild and ameliorating authority exchanged for the restored empire of the sword. The spirit of our institutions and the spirit of the age alike demand an account of every thing which seems like a disturbance of the natural equality or an invasion of the natural rights of man. Our large experience of the blessing of personal and civil liberty awakens in every benevolent mind a desire to see that blessing extended to every individual of the human race. But what is liberty, and how far it may be enjoyed by all, are questions of acknowledged difficulty. While we believe it to be the will of God that the life he has given should be a life of happiness to all, and that the sources of happiness distributed throughout the earth should be enjoyed by all, we can not shut our eyes to the fact that he himself has thrown obstacles in the way of that equality of enjoyment which we have assumed to be his general purpose. *He* has made the sources of enjoyment more accessible to some than to others, and *He* has endowed different individuals with capacities for enjoyment yet more various than the faculties and opportunities by which its means are to be procured. These two points of diversity in the human race have led some to charge their Maker with partiality: while others, well pleased to observe

that whatever advantage is allotted to some over the rest, is in their favor, are quite ready to acquiesce in the justice of the arrangement.

Both are in error, and the error in both is proved by the false corollaries they themselves deduce from their reasoning. In the first it leads to envy, hatred and malice, and to all those crimes which it is the office of Government to restrain and of law to punish. In the last it stifles sympathy; it nourishes false pride; it engenders false appetites and stimulates to indulgence and excess, by which the moral and intellectual man is transformed from the image of his God to that of a beast. These indeed are not denounced by law as crimes, for no law can reach them. But they are not the less evil because incorrigible.

But how shall we vindicate the justice of the Creator, unless we find some principle of compensation for these glaring inequalities? And where shall we find one, unless indeed one of these inequalities affords a compensation for the other? Let us see how this may be.

Money is the common measure of values, and wealth supplies the fund with which most enjoyments may be purchased. There are few sources of happiness to be explored and appropriated, to which wealth will not procure access, while it furnishes the price we must pay for them. The faculties which are most rare and most valuable to others, afford the possessor the surest means of acquiring wealth. Foremost among these, because rarest and most precious, are the powers of the mind, knowledge, genius, readiness of comprehension, originality of thought, soundness and sobriety of judgment, and all that marvellous combination which chiefly distinguishes man from his fellows, and to which collectively we give the name of talent. These have but to name their price, and it is readily, cheerfully, thankfully paid.

In this assembly I see myself surrounded by those whose presence here is a proof of high excellence in these endowments. But are these the wealthy of the land? By no means. And why not? There is not one present whose consciousness will not testify to the truth of the answer I am about to give.

It is because the gift of intellectual superiority is, by the wise dispensation of the Creator, associated with peculiar tastes and desires. The gifted son of genius does not so much as stretch forth his hand to take the wealth that courts his acceptance, because his thoughts are fixed on some of the few sources of enjoyment that wealth can not purchase. The delight of revelling amid the creations of fancy, the hardy joy of tasks of thought, the love of knowledge, for its own sake, the desire to diffuse the light of truth, and to advance the empire of mind, the desire to promote the welfare of our country and the happiness of the human race; above all, the love of honest fame, the just reward of intellectual excellence and moral worth, and active service in the cause of humanity—these are the instincts of greatness. Turning from the low pursuit of wealth, it is with these that minds of a high order satisfy their natural cravings. Disdaining to scramble for the draff and husks that fill the common trough, they take nothing from the fund that supplies the enjoyments of others. On the contrary, the fruit of their labors is to replenish that fund. The rich man is made richer, and the comforts of the poor are increased by their discoveries in art and science, and the happiness of all is secured by their wisdom and justice. Is it the worse, or the better, for those who court wealth; for those who delight to revel in the pleasures of sense; for those who wisely limit their desires to moderate competency; or for those who find their happiness in the bland sweets of domestic life, that God has been pleased to endow each man here present with faculties of a higher order than theirs, and to implant in each bosom a source of enjoyment which would be ill exchanged for the mines of Golconda?

I am persuaded, Gentlemen, that there is not one member of this assembly, who does not bear within his own breast a witness to the truth of what I have just said. It would be superfluous to add examples to illustrate the means devised by the Creator for equalizing the opportunities of happiness among his creatures, and multiplying the sources of enjoyment in proportion to the number who partake of it. But other instances abound in which the very antagonism of tastes, capacities and powers is made reciprocally a source of happiness to all concerned. I beg you to observe the multiplied diversities between the male and female character, contrived with a view to the happiness and to the moral and intellectual excellence of both. Is it by chance, or by any necessary consequence of his sex, that *man* is bold, hardy, enterprising, contentious, delighting to struggle with difficulty, delighting in contests with his fellows, and eager to bear away the prize of every strife? Woman, on the contrary, timid, feeble, helpless, shrinks within the domestic sanctuary, and feels that the great want of her nature is security for herself and her offspring. This she owes to the exercise and indulgence of the distinctive powers and passions of him to whom she looks for protection, while he, in her trusting helplessness and grateful love, finds the reward of his toils, the crown of his triumphs and the consummation of his felicity.

So far, without any stretch of presumption, we may venture to believe that we understand the design of the Creator. But the world is full of phenomena, physical and moral which admonish us that many of his ways are "past finding out." We every where see a sort of affinity of opposition, a sympathy of antagonism, a combination of incompatibilities, while one strange wild strain of harmo-

nious discord rises from the whole. In all things we find a sort of polarity, which suggests the idea of absolute incongruity between things to all appearance irreconcilably hostile to each other, when presently we see them drawn together by the power of an irresistible and exclusive attraction. On this strange law depends the whole theory of chemical affinities. Substances similar, or not much unlike, may mix and blend, but each retains its own properties. Contrast and opposition are necessary to that intimate combination which produces a new substance. In this, all the sharpness and asperities of the constituent parts are lost forever, and things which before seemed eager to contend with each other to make the life of man their prey, unite to form a healing drug that restores him to health and vigor.

In the moral world we see much analogous to this. It is surely not by chance, that the human race, sprung from one common parent, has undergone the various modifications that make the difference between the intellectual Caucasian, the fierce Malay, the soft Hindoo, the rude but docile Negro, and the brutish and intractable New Hollander. If we inquire after the *modus operandi* by which these changes were wrought, the naturalist may tell us of the influence of climate. But who made climates to differ, and who shall limit the power of the Most High to counteract their influence were such his will? It was clearly his design that these diversities should exist. Shall we deny ourselves liberty to investigate his purpose in this? Let me not be told that it is presumptuous to scan his purposes. To question their wisdom and justice is indeed presumptuous. But the instinct of religion in the heart of man has taught him, in all ages, to inquire his Maker's will, that he might live in conformity to it. Hence the universal craving after revelation. Hence the readiness with which every thing professing to be revelation has ever been received. Man has felt it to be his duty to know the character and purposes of his Creator. He has felt that the Creator must desire to reveal himself and his will to his creature. The research which was piety in Socrates, Plato and Tully—can it be impious now?

But God has himself revealed his great purpose in the creation of the human race. It is the eternal happiness of all, through faith in the Redeemer of the world. It is his declared will that all shall come to the knowledge of that truth on which eternal life depends. Can we believe in any purpose inconsistent with this? In contemplating the divine tactic according to which the whole human race is marshalled, are we not bound to seek some way of reconciling the details to this great end? Are we not authorized to believe that, in some way incomprehensible to us, these and all things else are *subservient* to it? We see the various products of the earth so widely scattered over its surface, as to invite to a universal exchange of commodities. In the universal intercourse of man with man to which this leads, we find the motive to this distribution. It diffuses knowledge over every part of the globe, and makes the seed of Shem and Canaan partakers of the great truth committed to the restless and enterprising race of Japhet. The diversities in the human species may be intended to conduce to the same great purpose. They suggest the idea that each race may be useful to the other, and may lead to combinations by which the condition of all may be improved, and the light of truth diffused among all. We plainly see how the other races may derive advantage from their intercourse with the Caucasian. It is not as yet so plain what benefit we may receive in return from the Malay or the Hottentot. Time may show. But in the case of the negro the discovery has been made. It was seen that his labor might be appropriated and turned to profit, and this led the white man to seek to open intercourse and form a connexion with him. The motive was indeed unworthy and sordid, but the result has been the physical, intellectual and moral improvement of the inferior race, and, in some respects, of both.

I proceed to show this; for I freely admit that, if the connexion between the Caucasian and African races has not been attended with moral good, every apology that can be offered for it must be rejected.

On the other hand, it may be fairly contended, that, if the temporal results are good, and promise well for the future welfare of both parties, then, though such results may not justify the means used to establish the connexion, yet the connexion itself is good and ought not rashly to be sundered. The actual working of the great machinery contrived by the All-Wise Creator can not be far from right, when it tends to the great declared purpose of the creation,—the temporal and eternal happiness of his creatures.

It is a striking fact, that, of all the sons of Adam, that particular family to which God chose first to commit his oracles, have always proved themselves, God being himself the witness, the most stiff-necked, rebellious, intractable and unteachable. It is in perfect harmony with this, that the European nations, to which the Gospel of *Love*, and *Peace* and *Humility*, was first communicated have been distinguished in all ages by systematic, far-seeing, concentred *Selfishness*, by a *Taste for War*, by restless *Ambition* and indomitable *Pride*. Is there no reason for this: would the Jews, who hardly believed when God spoke to them in thunder from Sinai, have received the testimony of man? And is not their stubborn incredulity, at this day, the strongest *human* evidence of the truth of the Old Testament, which *even they* believe? Were all Jews, would all believe in Jehovah, unless every mountain were a Horeb—every stream a Jordan witnesses of his miracles? And the Anglo-Saxon

race, the great herald of moral and political truth—were they to whom they carry their tidings and their lessons such as themselves, would they submit to be taught, unless their teachers could sustain their testimony by miracles such as authenticated that of the Apostles? The stream which is to water the land and replenish the ocean must flow from the mountains, and the vapors that feed them must be raised from the earth by a power which is not of the earth, that they may be collected and precipitated on eminences which must otherwise be doomed to eternal drought. To turn back the course of the rivers to the mountains would be hardly more preposterous than to attempt to diffuse truth by sending it from the credulous to the sceptical, from the humble to the proud, from the timid to the bold, from the stupid to the intellectual. Hard as it was to make believers of Jews and Christians of Europeans, it was with them that the task of enlightening and evangelizing the world had to commence.

When I thus show, that the precious truths of the Gospel have been first imparted to us for the benefit of others, to the end that, having freely received, we should freely give, it will be seen that I have at least entitled myself to the praise of candor. I have made a case of solemn and important duty imposed by the blessings we enjoy, and prescribed as the very condition of their enjoyment. How we have performed this duty is a question we are bound to answer, and in doing this we must not palter with our Maker, or shrink from the strict account that the giver of all good demands.

It would be worse than disingenuous, it would be false to pretend that the first intercourse between the sons of Japhet and Canaan took its rise from these considerations. The attempt to trace their connexion to such a cause would be absurd and impudent. It originated in cupidity; it was effected by violence and outrage; and characterized by the most barbarous cruelty. These things I do not propose to palliate. I have no wish, and I can have no motive to do so. It is a matter that touches us not. The sin is not ours nor that of our fathers. But whoever were the perpetrators, candor suggests a sort of apology, not only for their first fault, but for their more recent zeal to redress the supposed wrong of their victims. We have but to think of the African as he appeared at first to the European, hardly bearing the lineaments of humanity, in intellect scarcely superior to the brutes, and mainly distinguishable from them by the greater variety of his evil propensities, and by a something answering the purposes of speech better—though not much better—than the chattering of monkeys. Use has made us familiar with the color of the negro, and experience has made us acquainted with his heart and mind. Having learned to love him, let us not marvel to find a sympathy for his supposed wrongs in the breasts of those who once may have doubted whether he had a soul to be saved, or how his Maker could hold him responsible for the faults of a nature at once his crime and his punishment.

But it is not to censure, to palliate, or to justify that I advert to this. I speak of it only as a fact; as the starting point from whence we are to trace the moral influence of the actually subsisting relation between the two races.

That, since that relation was first established, there is a great moral improvement in both will not be denied. The remarkable fact is that this is greatest in those particulars which most influence, and are most influenced by that relation. So far as hatred has given place to love, dishonesty to fidelity, licentiousness to modesty, so far the change must meet the approbation of him, who, regarding the heart as the seat of crime, condemns every one who, even in thought, commits murder, adultery, or theft. I am well aware that this change is, in part, attributed, by those who view it from a distance, to a sort of moral coercion exerted by public opinion in this enlightened and moral age. It were well if this were so. The same opinion might also exert its influence in favor of the peasantry of the old continent and the laboring class in Great Britain. But, strangely enough, it has happened that while the white man was learning to appreciate the good qualities peculiar to the negro, and while the slave was learning to love his master, a change of precisely opposite character was going on in Europe. That change has deluged her realms with blood and still threatens to overthrow all her institutions, political, social and moral. One who will acquaint himself with the passionate loyalty, on the one hand, and the mild paternal authority on the other, of the Irish peasant and his landlord a century ago, will find something not widely different from the mutual sentiments of the master and slave at this day. What may be seen in Ireland now is surely not much better than the slavery of the African ever was in its worst form. The bond of sympathy that once connected the landed proprietor with all who lived upon his land is severed, while a like sympathy has been engendered between the white man and his negro slave.

If it be true that "Love is the fulfilling of the whole Law," then, in a moral and religious point of view, the growth of this sentiment between two races before divided by the strongest antipathies, is an approach toward that blessed condition when all the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, and all hearts shall be knit together in love for the sake of Him who loves them all. In that day, we are told "that the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the

cockatrice's den." How is this to be understood? Literally—of the beasts of the fen and forest? By no means. The lion must cease to be a lion in his *physical* nature before he can cease to live on flesh. May we not rather understand it of the lordly white lion of Caucasus, of the patient negro ox, of the fierce red wolf of our Western wilds, of the meek Hindoo lamb; of the serpent-like Malay, with his envenomed creece, and the foul Hottentot hyena gorging on garbage? All these are to be brought to harmonize and live in peace and love. The first step has been taken. The amicable union of two of these races has been brought about, though by means at first promising no such result. If these means were to be now used, the end might not justify them. It is not for *us* to do evil that good may come, for it may never come, or it might be divinely accomplished at no expense of evil. But when it is accomplished, shall we reject it? When the price has been paid and cannot be recalled; when God has been pleased to overrule the evil to his own good purposes, shall we cast away the benefit? Above all, shall we make it a brand of discord between brethren of the same race, to consume, like withes of straw, the ties of a common origin, religion and language? I beseech you, Gentlemen, let not this be so; and I pray you to hear me candidly, while I endeavor to show that the amelioration of the condition and character of the African slave in the United States, and the mild virtues which have taken place of savage cruelty in the breast of his master, are not the result of extrinsic causes, but the proper and natural fruit of their mutual relation; acting on the radical diversities between the Caucasian and the African races.

The only sound morality is the morality of the Gospel. Its sanction is faith—faith by which the heart is made better;—by which the will and affections are subdued to spontaneous obedience, through love to the author and founder of that faith. Its corner-stone is humility—its essential characteristic is subordination of the heart. Whatever habituates the mind of man to this, prepares him to receive God's truth in the love of it.

Such, I maintain, is the natural and proper effect of slavery on an inferior race placed in direct subjection and immediate communication with a master race of unquestionable superiority,—a superiority clearly admitted and manifested in all the affairs of life. So circumstanced, the love of the slave for his master is developed by a sort of *vis midi catrix Naturæ*. They who vindicate slavery as a prolonged war, offer but a lame defence; for war itself—what is it but violence and wrong? And what must be the condition of both parties living together in a state of rankling hostility? Must not both be eager to escape from a condition so wretched by cultivating in both a more kindly sentiment? The slave particularly, who sees no escape from his thraldom, and whose master is ever present to him in person, or by a power which is felt continually, feels the necessity of engendering in his own breast a sentiment, by virtue of which his fate, otherwise intolerable, may be made happy. He must learn to love his master or be miserable. On the least encouragement his affections gush forth like a healing balsam issuing from the wound itself. This upward tendency of the slave's affection for his master points directly to the throne of God. Let it be extended in the same course, and it terminates there. It prepares the mind for a faith congenial to its temper, and never thrown off. It is steadfast and endures to the end. It may not always thoroughly sanctify. It may sometimes be so mixed with error as to fail to reform him; but it is never renounced. The spirit that chafes and frets at control, and would not have had God to rule over it has been already subdued to the authority of a human and harder task-master, and the slave finds a sense of enlargement, not restraint, in bowing to the will of Him who is Lord of all.

Many persons believe, (and the thought is so beautiful it well deserves to be true,) that the distinctive characteristics of some inferior animals were given for the edification of man. Qualities which make some pernicious to the human race become associated in our minds with abhorrence, loathing or disgust. Others seem set before us as lures to virtue for which we cherish them, which we learn to love in them, and to cultivate in ourselves. The child is easily turned away from vices habitually stigmatized with epithets coined from the most hateful names in his nursery states. A whole volume of reproof is conveyed to the infant mind, when he hears of wolfish rapacity, serpent guile or tiger-like ferocity. But apply to him the endearing epithets of lamb or dove, and his bright smile and laughing eye tell how sensibly he feels the approbation and love implied in such expressions. The moralist has availed himself of this, and the heart and mind receive few lessons more touching or more profound than are learned from the fables of Æsop and Gay. The latter avows that his apologies are written with this view. Every man who will analyse his own mind must be sensible how much he has learned from them, and no father would willingly dispense with such efficient helps in the great task of education.

Of all the creatures by whose mute teachings and exhortations the mind is enlightened and the heart made better, there is none that inculcates a lesson so salutary as that of the humble, faithful, affectionate and cheerful African slave to his proud, self-seeking, restless, discontented and unthankful master. Does he ask, as he sometimes does, why he should love God, who requires of him that he should eat his bread in the sweat of his face; who

punishes all his misdeeds and short-comings; who sometimes afflicts him when conscious of *no* fault; and whose eternal wrath is denounced against hardened impenitence? How must he stand rebuked, if he lifts his eye to mark the look of affectionate solicitude, which, at the moment, is scanning his troubled and moody countenance; when he hears the kind tone that asks to know his wishes; when he sees the ready smile that accompanies the prompt obedience; and then reflects that these things come from one not *his* creature; whose powers and faculties are not of *his* gift; but of whom he requires all that God demands of him, and on whom he has sometimes inflicted severities he knows to have been unjust?

I beseech you, Gentlemen, reject not this idea because it may seem new and strange. It is not new. It is not strange. It is *God's* truth which he has often spoken to the heart of each one of you who is a father. The application alone is new. How often, when your heart has relented over the meek and affectionate repentance of an offending child, have you heard those gracious words; "Like as a father pitieth his children!" And what does he demand in return? That you should love him as a child? Aye; and more than that. That you should love him as a slave loves his master, if he be only not harsh, oppressive and cruel. The love of the child may be warmer and fonder: but it is not so meek; not so trusting; not so patient; not so enduring, not so *Christian.* The child buries the father, and divides the inheritance, and makes him a family of his own. The love of the slave cherishes his master's memory, when all besides have forgotten him, and watches over his grave like the meek and loving boy by his Redeemer's cross, when all besides had forsaken him and fled. The last tear that flows to the memory of a kind patriarchal master, trickles down the cheek of a slave.

Do you demand the *rationale* of this? Do you insist that I shall show how it can be so? Will you continue to believe that I labor under some strong delusion, (my sincerity you can not doubt;—I know it—I feel it) until I have proved by argument *a priori*, that such should be, and must be the natural and necessary result of his condition? I am ready to do so, for I derive the answer from the same divine example, which can not mislead.

God demands our hearts. He loves us as a father, and seeks our love in return. But does he seek it by the same means we use toward our children? His love is the same, but his discipline is far wiser. He does not expect love as the return for unpurchased benefits. All our comforts are the purchase of toil and care. He does not woo it by fond indulgence. "Jeshurun waxes fat, and kicks." He does not soothe by weak mistaken clemency. "He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." He does not seek to make a temporary relation, a relation soon to terminate in complete independence, the basis of an enduring empire over our hearts. He has bought us with a price. We are his, body and soul—for time and for eternity—now and forever. He gives us food and raiment and bids us be therewith content; and he cheers our progress along the path of life by that gradual melioration of condition, which rarely fails to attend on honest industry, and which our own experience tells us is best for happiness. *The unfortunate fortunate* few, who, without merit and without exertion, are suddenly advanced to situations and circumstances for which they are not prepared, who, envied at first, are found in the end to be objects of commiseration, seem set for examples from which the multitude may learn patience and contentment. Such are his methods with us, and precisely these he commends to the master in his treatment of the slave, by making such treatment conducive to his own comfort and prosperity.

It is no part of my plan to speak of the physical condition of the slave. But I am constrained to advert to it here, so far as to show the justness of the analogy I have pointed out. Without descending to details I will go so far as to say, that his condition is one of steadily progressive improvement, in physical comforts and enjoyments. I will instance only one proof of this general proposition, which rests not on the testimony of individuals, but will be verified by all persons whose memories go back as much as half a century. It is the gradual increase of the *stature* of the slave and his gradual improvement in personal appearance and personal habits during that time. In this assembly it would be superfluous to argue from these facts, that there must have been, during that time, a corresponding improvement in all the elements of comfort and enjoyment. The most unpracticed eye will be, at once, struck with the difference, in these particulars, between those who have been for many generations among us, and those whose ancestors have been more recently introduced. If this advancement were more rapid, it might presently come to a stand, like the precious prosperity of nations that get rich too fast. What follows is a form of wretchedness from which there is no escape—the wretchedness of those who continually and hopelessly cry, "who will show us any good?" I rejoice to think that many generations may yet pass away before the African slave or his master will reach the pinnacle of splendid misery. In the mean time it may be hoped that both will continue happy in that condition most favorable to virtuous contentment, a state of steadily progressive advancement in the comforts of civilization, and in the moral and intellectual improvement that civilization imparts.

Were it my purpose merely to vindicate the institution of domestic slavery, by showing that the relation actually subsisting between master and slave is favorable to the growth of religion in the

hearts of both, I might rest this matter here. But this would be an imperfect view of its beneficial results. To say that any thing makes men religious is to say that it makes them better. But not only has slavery proved a nurse to virtue *through the agency of religion:* It comes in *aid* of religion to carry on the work of reformation in the heart and life of the slave.

The improvement in the condition of the negro has a direct tendency to counteract some of the vices that formerly characterized him, both in his native country and in the early years of his sojourn among us. The white man found him a *naked* savage, prone to the unrestrained indulgence of sensual appetite. His disregard to cleanliness and his indifference to decorum were not at once removed. The rudest garment that could shelter him from the inclemency of the seasons at first satisfied his desires, and this, on the approach of summer, was impatiently thrown off. It is in the memory of many persons, that they considered clothes as an inconvenient incumbrance, and that they were often almost at the age of puberty, seen in a state of perfect nakedness. By degrees a sense of shame was awakened. A taste in dress has been encouraged by the better clothing provided, as the feelings of the master became more kind and sympathizing. A feeling of self-respect has been inspired, and this has brought with it pride of character, modesty, chastity, and, not unfrequently, refined delicacy of sentiment. The proportion of females of irreproachable virtue is perhaps not greater in the lowest class in any form of society; while those who put away shame and give themselves up to licentious practices are as effectually put out of better society among them as among us. Many are still betrayed into youthful indiscretion, but the connubial tie is now commonly held sacred. There is an increasing disposition to consecrate it by the solemnities, and to strengthen it by the obligations of religion. The Episcopal minister of the village in which I live, celebrates the rites of matrimony between as many blacks as whites; the white members of the family, with their most intimate friends, sometimes witness the ceremony, and the parties, with their numerous guests, close an evening of festive hilarity with an entertainment of which the most fastidious epicure might be glad to partake.

Can the moral effect of these things be questionable? Even admitting, that, in the essential quality of female purity, the slave may come short of the class which fills the same place in society where slavery is not known; yet it is not with that class, but with the negro, in his primitive state of wild freedom, that the comparison is to be made. The improvement in this respect is moreover progressive. At intervals of ten or a dozen years a change may be distinctly seen to have taken place, and but little farther progress is wanting to place this once degraded and brutish race on a level in this respect with the lower classes of society in the most moral country under the sun.

In another particular a change of equal importance is taking place. Affection, on the one hand, disposes to confidence and on the other invites it, and confidence provokes to honesty. The savage is universally regardless of the rights of *meum* and *tuum*. The slave was, at first, universally a thief. At this day there abound among them examples of integrity absolutely incorruptible. A slave notoriously dishonest is held by them in abhorrence and contempt. The little liberties which children will take, under the strong temptation to indulge their appetites with delicacies, are severely punished by their own parents. Falsehood is perseveringly rebuked and chastised by them, and, in almost every family, there are servants who are unhesitatingly trusted with every thing the house contains. Nor is this confidence confined to the master. A verbal message, sent by a trusty slave, is all sufficient to obtain goods, or even money, from those with whom the master deals. This seemingly dangerous confidence is never abused. In their own transactions, too, a character for integrity is established, which ensures, in all their little dealings, a perfect reliance on their word. In the village in which I reside there may be 1,500 inhabitants. Of this number perhaps one third are slaves. Of these I am assured, by a retailer of proverbial caution, that not less than fifty (equal to half the whole number of adult males) can command any credit with him, which their own prudence will permit them to ask. Yet for such debts he has no security, no remedy. They are beyond the reach of law, and an appeal to the master might involve him in the penalties denounced by some antiquated statutes against such as deal with slaves.

These statutes and others of a congenial character afford a strong proof of the moral improvement of the slave population. They were, doubtless, called for by the state of things existing at the time of their enactment. At this day they are so utterly superfluous that no man is so strict as to enforce them, and none so scrupulous as to govern himself by them. They form collectively a code of extreme rigor, and go far to justify the abhorrence, so often expressed by good men, of an institution producing a state of things that can render such severity necessary. But the evil has cured itself. Thus it is that the wise use of the rod of parental discipline establishes the most affectionate confidence between the prudent father and the son that once trembled at his presence. Thus it is that military discipline, once having made obedience sure, makes indulgence safe. In almost every case where we see men living in relations best for the happiness of all, where power is gentle and obedience liberal, where passion rests under due subordination to reason, where the wisdom of

the enlightened, and the virtue of the good, and the prudence of the sagacious are wisdom and virtue and prudence for those who, in themselves, possess none of these qualities, and the blind walk safely and confidently by the guidance of those who can see, the heart may shudder, if, turning away from the contemplation of these desirable results we look too closely to the means by which they were brought about. The laws I speak of are but memorials of what has been; like the trial by battle in the English law, long retaining its place in the same code that denounced the duellist as a murderer. They are but the scars of stripes formerly inflicted. They forbid the slave to be taught to read. Yet all whose minds thirst after knowledge (and if there be danger, these are the dangerous) have abundant opportunity. The child is encouraged to impart the first rudiments to his nurse, and her access to books and newspapers is unrestrained. She has all the stimulus to the cultivation of her mind, and all the aid that intelligent conversation supplies; and nothing more strikingly shows the unintellectual character of the race, than the general indifference to these advantages. Each one who makes use of them may instruct the rest, and the leisure of all is much more than the laboring class enjoys in other parts of the world.

The penal code abounds too with laws denouncing capital punishment against slaves; and the trial by jury is denied them. The effect of these things was probably as harsh, at one time, as the laws themselves now seem. In Virginia the slave is not committed to a jury sworn to try whether he be guilty or no, but to a sort of discretionary power exercised by a bench of justices bound by no specific oath. The question with them often seems to be whether he shall be punished or no. This is appalling. But let humanity take heart. At this day this discretion is exercised altogether in favor of the slave. For offences not affecting life or limb he is commonly left to the jurisdiction of his master, whose punishments, falling far short of those denounced by law, fully satisfy the public. The idea of trying a slave for larceny, after he has been flogged by his master, is as abhorrent to our notions as the putting a free man twice in jeopardy for the same offence. Moreover the dissent of one of five justices is enough to acquit. To secure the unanimity necessary to conviction, in a capital case, the guilt of the accused must not only be proved incontestibly, but there must be nothing to justify, nothing to excuse, nothing to extenuate, nothing even to awaken compassion. The court screens the accused alike from the caprice of juries, and the severity of the law. The importance of this protection can only be appreciated by those who are aware of the total want of sympathy between the negro and the white man who owns *no slave*. He is glad to escape from a jury composed of such to those whose daily intercourse with their own slaves has taught them to know and love the peculiar virtues of the African. Nor has interest any thing to do in this matter. The owner of a slave who is executed receives his price from the treasury. But such demands on it are almost unknown, for punishment is hardly ever inflicted or deserved.

The regulations I speak of are peculiar to Virginia. But the manner of their administration there is given in proof of the change wrought by time in the relation between master and slave. This change is progressive, and an accurate observer may see that, from time to time, the great body of slaves have become more attached, more content with their condition, less licentious and more honest; and that, meanwhile, their comforts have been increased, and that the master has become more kind, more indulgent, milder in his methods of government and more confiding. The voice of command is giving place to that of courteous request; the language of objurgation is exchanged for that of grave reproof, and it becomes daily more manifest, that, whatever griefs may fall to the lot of either party, both are happy in each other, and happy in a relation, with the duties of which use has made both familiar.

In much that I have said here, I am aware that I have spoken as a witness. In that character I speak reluctantly. But I am emboldened to do so by the assurance that the candid will be ready to believe my testimony because of its conformity with reasoning founded on the nature of things. I am supported also by the conviction that the knowledge and feeling of the truth of what I have said are in the hearts and minds of many in this presence. But were there none such here, who could believe me so absurdly rash as to venture on statements, which, if false, are known to be false by all those whose good opinion is the only fame I can hope for.

I feel assured moreover that thousands will adopt and own a sentiment, which, I doubt not, many present may hear with surprise. I am aware that the interest of the Southern master in his slave is commonly considered as a thing to be estimated in dollars and cents. It seems to be a prevailing belief, that we would be glad to give up our slaves if we could receive something in exchange not very far short of their value as commonly estimated. This may be true of many. Some may be satisfied, by calculations easily made, that they might turn the price to better account, by giving it in wages to hirelings. I have little doubt that this is true, and yet I am sure that multitudes, even of those most fully convinced by such reasonings, would make the exchange with great reluctance. I speak but for a smaller number, but there are certainly *some* for whom I may speak, when I say that they would not willingly make it on any terms whatever. With such it is an affair of the heart. It presents not a question of profit and loss, but of the

sundering of a tie in which the best and purest affections are deeply implicated. It imports the surrender of friendships the most devoted, the most enduring, the most valuable. I have spoken of this already, but I must be pardoned for alluding to it again. I must be allowed to offer a word on behalf of the mother around whose bed there clusters a crowd of little ones from whom death is about to tear her. Who, when she is gone, will be a mother to the prattling urchin, unconscious of the loss he is about to sustain, and whose childish sports are even now as full of glee as if death were not in the world? Who but she, who already shares with her the natural appellation, and performs, with a loving heart, more than half the duties of a mother? She has daughters growing up. A roof may be found to shelter them; one whom the world calls a friend may usher them into society; instruction may be purchased for them, and the soundest maxims of morals, religion and decorum may be inculcated. But who is to be with them when they lie down, and when they rise up? Who is to watch and accompany their outgoings and their incomings? Who is to be with them in the dangerous hours of privacy, restraining, regulating, purifying their conversation and their thoughts? These are the proper duties of a mother, the importance of which renders her loss so fatal. Who is to perform them? There she stands. It is the same that supports the languid head of the dying mother, and holds the cup to her parched lips. The same, whose untiring vigilance, day after day and night after night, has watched by that bed of death, with a fidelity to which friendship between equals affords no parallel, and which the wealth of the Indies could not purchase.

But, if the devotion of the slave is so absolute, it may be asked where can be the harm of severing the superfluous bond which deprives his services of the praise due to them, by giving a semblance of compulsion to what is voluntary. The question is specious enough; but the answer is partly found in what I have already said. To answer it more fully, it is necessary to advert to a gross and fatal error in morals and politics, which has indeed but few advocates, but which, to a certain extent, influences the sentiments and conduct of many whose reason distinctly rejects it.

It is an error that took its rise in the alliance between genius and licentiousness, formed in the cloisters of the monastery a few centuries ago. In that dark time, when learning and power were monopolized by the priesthood, ambition lured men into the church, and the church condemned them to celibacy. But love is of all ages and conditions of society, and none more keenly feels its power than the sensitive child of genius. Restrained by the laws of his order yet more than by the laws of God, he could only evade the former by openly defying the latter. The plausible sophisms by which he sought to cheat the object of his licentious passion into preference of the joys of lawless love to that sacred union which upholds the order of society, and which God has declared to be honorable in his sight, were drawn from the idea that love must perish as soon as the restraints of law are applied to it. The echo of these sentiments has not yet died away. They are embodied in Pope's mellifluous lines.

> "Love, free as air, at sight of human ties,
> Spreads his light wings, and in a moment flies.
> Should at my feet the world's great master fall,
> Himself, his throne, his world, I'd scorn them all.
> Not Cæsar's empress would I deign to prove:
> No! make me mistress to the man I love!
> If there be yet another name more free
> More fond than mistress, make me that to thee!
> Oh, happy state! when souls each other draw,
> When love is liberty, and nature law;
> All then is full, possessing and possessed,
> No craving void left aching in the breast;
> Ev'n thought meets thought, ere from the lips it part,
> And each warm wish springs mutual from the heart."

Now this is very harmonious and very eloquent. But is it true? It may be so, if that we dignify with the name of love is nothing but a purely selfish preference of one person over another. The proverbial charm of variety will certainly have its effect here, and if it is this sensual appetite or dreamy phantasy that is to be cultivated and indulged, then is there good reason in these ideas. But God has made the well being of society depend on a union that forbids the indulgence of this vagrant taste, and checks the caprices of fancy. How have men been brought to submit universally to such restraints? Is it not that the wise Creator has implanted in the heart a counterpollent principle? Is it not that the very restraint of which we are at first impatient, engenders, in every well constituted mind, a correction of the evil? The most profound thinkers have long since decided, that the indissoluble nature of the connubial tie teaches the parties to put a curb on the heart and imagination which restrains their wanderings; and men and women are found to pass long lives in harmony and mutual love, who, in the earlier stages of their connexion, might have parted forever, if separation had been possible. To render this union thus efficacious, it is wisely accompanied with such a community of interests, that neither party can engage in the separate and selfish pursuit of any permanent good. It is sometimes seen not fully to produce the desired result, when parties come together, each bringing children of a former marriage. These are the objects of peculiar affections and distinct interests, which often interrupt harmony, and prevent that perfect amalgamation, which the law contemplates and desires to effect. What would be the consequence, if, beside this cause of dissension, the husband and wife should have no children common to both, and each had a separate

and independent faculty of acquiring property for their respective offspring, cannot easily be estimated. That the affection of the parties would be exposed to the rudest trials is quite certain. It would probably soon terminate in open rupture, not from a preference on the part of either for some new face, but from absolute disgust and well deserved hatred.

Now something like this would attend the emancipation of that female slave. She is sure of those necessaries and comforts with which education and use have made her content, she has no faculty of acquiring property, she has no means of providing for her children, but she knows that they are well provided for already. She is thus in condition to give herself up to the duties of her station and a care of the children that have hung at her breast with her own, and on whose welfare she feels that that of herself and her offspring depends. Emancipate her; emancipate them: strip them of the *protecting disabilities* with which the law surrounds them, and she will see at once the necessity and the duty of living for them alone. She must do so, for the mistaken philanthropy which has turned her and her offspring naked and defenceless on the cold charities of the world at large, demands that every effort, every care, every thought be devoted to the almost hopeless task of saving them from want. In rare instances, uncommon qualities and exemplary virtue on both sides, might preserve friendship between her and her master's family. But a *conflict* of interests would have taken the place of a *community* of interests; and friendship, under such circumstances, would no longer result naturally from the relation between the parties. It would be a forced state of feeling, and would be liable to perish in a moment on the failure of any one of the innumerable conditions essential to its existence.

It may be added, that, if the value of slaves of this class is to be computed by estimating only such services as money can buy, these services are purchased at too high a rate. They may be purchased from hirelings for much less than is freely given to favorite slaves, by way of indulgence and gratuity. But the possession of such a slave, who is not only the servant, but the friend of his master, the vigilant guardian of his interests, and, in some things, a sagacious and faithful adviser, is a *luxury of the heart*, which they, who can afford it, would not part with at any price.

It is for no sordid interest then that I should plead, when, if addressing one having power to abolish this relation, I should implore his forbearance. Speaking on behalf, not only of myself, but of the slave, by whom I know I should not be disavowed, I would entreat him to pause and reflect, before sundering a tie which can never be reunited, a cord spun from the best and purest and most disinterested affections of the heart. I would conjure him, by the very considerations so often invoked against us, not to break up that beautiful system of domestic harmony, which, more than any thing else, foreshadows the blissful state in which love is to be the only law, and love the only sanction and love the supreme bliss of all.

They to whom these ideas are new may think they savor of paradox and extravagance. I am not aware that they have ever been publicly proclaimed by any one. But I beg you to believe that I would not venture to utter them here, did I not know that they float more or less distinctly in the minds of all who can be supposed capable of appreciating and comprehending them. They may not be expressed in words, but they find a mute language in the cheerful humility, the liberal obedience, the devoted loyalty of the slave, and in the gentleness, the kindness, the courtesy of the master. These are the appropriate manifestations of those affections which it is the office of religion to cultivate in man, and I appeal to them as evidences of the ameliorating influence of this much misunderstood relation on the hearts and minds of both parties. That such results are universal, I will not pretend to say; but that the cause which has produced them will go on to produce them more extensively, I conscientiously believe. "If the thing be not of God, it will surely come to nought;" but so fully am I convinced that it has his sanction and approbation, that I expect it to cease only when, along with other influences divinely directed, it shall have accomplished its part of the great work of enlightening, evangelizing and regenerating the human race.