

1844

# An Essay on the Moral and Political Effect of the Relation Between the Caucasian Master and the African Slave (Part II)

N. Beverley Tucker

---

## Repository Citation

Tucker, N. Beverley, "An Essay on the Moral and Political Effect of the Relation Between the Caucasian Master and the African Slave (Part II)" (1844). *Faculty Publications*. 1341.  
<https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/facpubs/1341>

We give below the conclusion of the Essay of one of our most valued contributors, upon "THE POLITICAL EFFECTS of the relation between the Caucasian Master and the African Slave." The "*moral effects*" were considered in the June Messenger. The reader is aware, that the Essay was intended to be read before the National Institute, at its general meeting in April last, in Washington. It would have presented a fine opportunity for the South to be heard upon a subject of which many are so blindly ignorant, and a proper understanding of which is necessary for the rights and security of the South. But the discussion, mild and philosophical as it is, had to be forborne. Deeply is it to be deplored that there are any interests in our Union, so dear and vital to a large portion of the States, that can not even be vindicated, on a national rostrum, and at the bar of Philosophy.—[Ed. Mess.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SOU. LIT. MESSENGER.

Dear Sir,—I send you the second part of the paper intended to have been read before the National Institute in April last. When I wrote it, I had not seen Carlyle's work, "The Past and Present." I had accidentally seen in a newspaper one passage to which I have already adverted: recently, I have met with that publication, and was agreeably surprised at the similarity between its first chapter, and the concluding portion of this Essay.

I have omitted to mention a fact that may give it an interest in the eyes of some readers. When I found that it would not be proper to read it before the Institute, I should have desisted from the undertaking, but for the request of my lamented friend, the late Secretary of State. We had frequently conversed on the subject and his views fully coincided with my own. This fact alone should have great weight with those who remember the surpassing benevolence that distinguished that wise and good man. He believed that the view that I have presented ought to influence the minds of the truly benevolent and pious; and we both hoped that it might induce many such to hesitate—to pause—to inquire before taking any further steps in a crusade against an institution so much misunderstood.

We both, moreover, thought it desirable to call the attention of our own countrymen to the value of this element in our social system, as a means of facilitating the tasks of Government, and perpetuating our existing political Constitutions.

This is the purpose of this second part.

## AN ESSAY

*On the Moral and Political Effect of the Relation between*

### THE CAUCASIAN MASTER AND THE AFRICAN SLAVE.

Intended to have been read before the National Institute at their meeting in April, 1844.

If your minds have not rejected, as wholly fallacious, all that I have already said, I flatter myself that what I have to offer on behalf of the *political* effect of slavery, as it exists among us, will be favorably received. I do not propose to speak of it as an element of wealth. That branch of the subject I leave to the political economists, by whom it is generally condemned. Be it so. I am content to acquiesce in their judgment. But there is something better than wealth. It is Happiness, of which wealth is but an instrument. There are some things too more conducive to Happiness than Wealth: These are order, harmony, tranquillity, and security. The influence of this institution on these—its place

and its value in the mechanism of political society are what I propose now to consider.

When God first cursed the earth for the sin of man, he commanded it no more to bring forth spontaneously the grains and fruits necessary for his subsistence, but doomed him to earn and eat his bread in the sweat of his face. To understand from this that no man from thenceforth should ever eat the bread of idleness, would be, "to make God a liar." But the fulfilment of the denunciation against the race of Adam *collectively* is found in this; that, though some are permitted to pass their lives in uneasy and unprofitable sloth, the great mass of mankind must spend their days in toil, or starve.

"Wisdom cometh by the opportunity of leisure," and to him "whose life is between the handles of the plough," this opportunity is denied. Hence the curse that dooms the mass of mankind to toil, dooms them also to ignorance. When the former penalty is recalled the latter may be remitted. Not till then.

You will not think me so absurd as to mean that there is no intellectual excellence, no wisdom, except among those who enjoy the advantages of regular education. We know this not to be true; and our own community abounds with examples to the contrary. But that native energy of mind, which, in its upward spring, throws off the depressing weight of poverty, is a rare endowment. He who possesses it, presently separates himself from the class in which he had been placed, by a blunder of fortune; and one of the first uses that he makes of his superior powers is to secure to himself the advantages of education, which others, misunderstanding the secret of his success, foolishly undervalue. He, whose mind God has enlightened with that Wisdom, which is the heritage of such favored beings, chooses Wisdom as his portion. The fool alone chooses folly, and remains content in ignorance. The proposition still remains true, that he whose lot is a lot of abject toil, whether he were born to it, or has sunk down to it, by his own proper weight, is necessarily destitute of that enlightened wisdom, which might qualify him to take his place in councils whose deliberations concern the happiness of millions.

The fact that instances of men rising to distinction from a low condition are more frequent in the United States than elsewhere, is but a confirmation of what I have said. The wages of labor here are such as to afford the laborer much leisure for mental cultivation, if he prefers that to idleness or dissipation. None of the walks of life are fully occupied, and for every youth, however humble, who makes any display of intellectual power, there is always a place to be found, in which he can cultivate his mind, and earn his bread at the same time. Such have been the facilities by which all such, among ourselves, have attained the vantage ground from which they afterwards mounted to eminence.

When men act together in large bodies, he who would lead must sometimes be content to follow. That he may make his wisdom the wisdom of other men, he must adopt something of their folly, just as he who would stop a falling weight, must yield to the shock. To a certain extent this is perhaps desirable. Wise men, taking counsel only of each other, might forget to make allowances for others not so wise as themselves. The presence of a few fools may be necessary to remind them, that they are acting for fools, as well as for wise men. Thus it is, that in a multitude of counsellors there is wisdom; and if fools could learn as readily from wise men, as wise men learn from fools, the multitude could not be too indiscriminate.

But, unfortunately, it is not so; and no man who has had occasion to witness what is done, in numerous deliberative bodies, can fail to have observed that much good is marred, and much mischief is done, from the necessity of conceding too much to the prejudices of the ignorant. Whatever good, wise and practical men may be able to extract from their commerce with fools, it is only under the management of the wise that good can be made of it. But take the mass of mankind, in any country upon earth, and refer, *directly* and *without debate* to the vote of a majority of these all questions of municipal regulation and foreign policy, assigning, in every instance, as much weight to the suffrage of one as to that of another, and no man can calculate the disastrous consequences that might ensue.

Something like this is done in every country, which refers the choice of its lawgivers and magistrates to universal suffrage. The effect is always mischievous. Under peculiar, and very advantageous circumstances, it is not necessarily fatal, and hence it is that we are enabled to deceive ourselves, while observing the operation of universal suffrage, in those States of the Union where it prevails. In a country where much land is unappropriated, and where a much larger proportion remains as so much dead capital in the hands of the owner, for want of purchasers to buy or laborers to cultivate it, the tasks of Government are few and simple and of easy execution. Its business is altogether with *individuals*—to regulate their conduct, to punish their crimes, and to adjust their controversies. It performs no function not within the competency of conservators of the Peace, Constables, and the ordinary Courts of Justice. It is little more than a loose and careless police, and a system of regulated arbitration. With men in *masses* it has nothing to do. The only distinctions in society are produced by the tastes and caprices of individuals. As these may prompt they will arrange themselves into *cliques* and *coteries*, but, *politically speaking*, there is but *one class* and *one interest*. The right of personal liberty is alike precious to all men, and, where all have property, the right of property will be held sacred by all, and the legislation which is

best for some will be best for all. There will be therefore no misgovernment, but such as is produced by well-intentioned blunders. Even against these there is an important security in that state of society. There is no *just* ground of jealousy between the rich and poor, the enlightened and ignorant. Demagogues indeed, striving to imitate what is done elsewhere, and to rise to power by means for which society is not prepared, may seek to inspire this jealousy, but they will find it difficult to do so, until misgovernment affords occasions to deceive and corrupt the people. Until then, the natural instinct of man disposes to mutual confidence, and the blind submit to be led by those who can see, and have no inducement to lead them astray.

It is not until the progress of society has distributed mankind into *different classes*, having distinct and conflicting interests, that the *political action* of Government commences, and the wisdom of its *political* structure is put to any test.\* To adjust these interests and to accommodate the strifes which arise from them, is the great problem for the Statesman. All experience has shown that the more powerful class will sacrifice the interests of the weaker, whenever its own can be advanced by doing so. It makes no difference what is the source or character of the power thus wielded. Such is the use that always has been, and always will be made of it.†

The temptations to this abuse of power are not always equally strong. They may be counteracted by conscientious scruples, in some cases, in some by the fear of consequences; and in others, power may be baffled by the superior intelligence and address of the weaker party, or defeated by the treachery of its own agents. All these diversities may be illustrated by the conflict of interests between the rich and poor in any community.

1. TEMPTATION. If we suppose the moral qualities of prudence and justice to be distributed alike throughout the whole, we certainly make a supposition at least as favorable to the poorer class as the

\* "Clearly a difficult point for Government," says Carlyle, "that of dealing with these masses, if indeed it be not the *sole* point and problem of Government, and all others mere accidental crotchets, superficialities, and beating of the wind."—French Revolution, vol. 1, p. 44. Again he says, "Some happy continents, as the Western one, with its Savannahs, where whosoever has four willing limbs finds food under his feet, and an infinite sky over his head, can do without Governing."—Id. p. 268.

† It is not meant that political power will be always thus abused. It may be held in check and in awe by physical power. The Aristocracy of France blindly disregarding the danger of oppressing the subject mass, defied the naked rabble of *sans culottism*. The aristocracy of Great Britain, made wise by their experience, treats Chartism in quite another guise, and recognises the unrepresented classes as the proper objects of the paternal care of Government. Benevolence has doubtless much to do with this; but the rod is a marvellous improver of all the virtues.

history of human nature will justify. Now, under a Constitution which should lodge the powers of Government in the hands of the smaller class of wealthy men, there is certainly *some* temptation to abuse their power over the poor. But this is not a temptation that addresses itself strongly to the *interests* of the ruling party. There is, unhappily in too many, a pleasure in the indulgence of an arrogant and insolent disposition to trample on the helpless; but, from the nature of the thing, the *plunder of the poor* is an unproductive fund; and the little that can be gained by it would be of small value in the estimation of those already rolling in affluence. Reverse the case, and we shall see a very different result. The temptation to a hungry multitude, armed with political authority, to gorge themselves with the superfluities of the rich would be such as human nature cannot be expected to resist.

2. CONSCIENCE. The injustice of a course of legislation intended to enrich one class at the expense of another, should, in either case, deter the party in power from such a course. But how much more striking is that injustice, when the portion of the community to be plundered is already in a state of penury, and the portion to be enriched is already rich, than when the reverse of all this is the case? In the first case, no sophistry can be devised to palliate such an abuse of power. In the latter, a thousand texts may be drawn from the Bible itself, capable of being so perverted as to afford a plausible justification of it. So true is this, that in every country, where public opinion exercises a distinct influence on legislation, though the multitude be not directly represented, Charity (which from its nature should be gratuitous) is compulsory, established as a system, and enacted by law.

3. DANGER OF CONSEQUENCES. The *abuse* of constitutional power and prerogative in the hands of a privileged few is always *dangerous to themselves*. As a general proposition it may be said, that the *physical* power is always on the side of numbers, and the power of the few depends for its security on *opinion*. This opinion must not be outraged by oppression, or any thing that looks like oppression. So far from it, the ruling party must be careful that the sufferings of the poorer classes, however caused, be not imputed to Government. A sop must be thrown, from time to time, to the many mouthed and hungry Cerberus', lest he devour his rulers. So far from taking from the poor for the benefit of the rich, the rich have to tax themselves for the benefit of the poor, and the manner in which the benefit is received shows plainly enough what might be the consequence of withholding it. The power would be presently wrested from the hands of the ruling class, and the use which would then be made of it may be read in the history of revolutionary France.

There is *no such check* on the abuse of constitu-

tional authority by the more numerous class. They fear nothing from the physical power of the multitude, for they are themselves the multitude, and so long as the rulers of their choice administer the Government with an eye to their special benefit, so long all is safe. They have nothing to do but to profess to make the greatest good of the greatest number the sole object of all their legislation, and to proclaim an irreconcilable war of the poor against the rich.

4. WANT OF INTELLIGENCE AND TREACHERY OF LEADERS. In such a state of things what is to save the rich from being destroyed and swallowed up? Nothing but the last of those checks to the abuse of power which I have just enumerated. Though not withheld by a sense of justice, or a fear of consequences, power in the ignorant multitude may be baffled by the superior intelligence and address of the less numerous party, or defeated by the treachery of its own agents. These agents are rarely content to remain poor after they get into power. Whatever may be wrung from the common adversary, an equal distribution among their followers is no part of their plan of operations. The allotment of plunder is confined to the leaders of the party, and to the shrewd and crafty whom it is not easy to deceive, and who will be most expert in deceiving the rest. All these soon become rich, and though they may still profess the same zeal for the poor as formerly, and, for a time, retain their place as leaders, they will take care to conduct their future operations with an especial regard to their own newly acquired interests. Hence the short-lived reign of Democracy, which never survives a single generation, and always terminates in the sole power of some Demagogue.

When a community, in the gradual and sure progress of society, has divided itself into classes, of which one, (and that the lowest) is more numerous than all the rest, then it is that the wisdom of its institutions and the strength of its Government are tested. If no indulgence is extended to this most numerous class, if its few rights are invaded, its murmurs despised, and its sufferings insulted, we read the consequences in the history of revolutionary France.

If their rights are duly regarded, their complaints heard, their wants provided for, as far as this can be done by legislative authority, and a portion of political power is conceded to them, to appease their discontents, we may see something of the effects of this humane and wise policy in what is now passing in England. It is certainly the best that can be done. The part taken by Sir Robert Peel in these measures, considering the relation in which he stands to the laboring class, entitles him to their gratitude, and the applause of the world. But what is to be the result of such measures can not be foreseen. Happy for him if the hungry monster does not tear the hand extended to its relief.

If, instead of adopting palliatives and half measures, a bolder and franker course be taken, if all prerogatives are abolished, and all privileges renounced, and popular discontent be indulged by the establishment of perfect political equality, it is easy to foresee the consequences. Between the absolute surrender of all power into the hands of the most numerous class, and the exercise of power by the whole collectively, on a plan which shall assign to that class, which outnumbers all the rest, a weight and authority proportioned to its numbers, there can be little practical difference. In either case it is plain to see that the distinctive interest of that most numerous class (an interest peculiar to itself, and hostile to every other) would be alone consulted. The property of the rich becoming the prey of the poor, property would lose half its value from a sense of insecurity; the motives to industry would be lost, and all those innumerable evils would ensue, for which men never find a remedy but under the dominion of a Despot.

I beg pardon for dwelling on truths so trite and obvious. Yet while I feel bound to apologise for this, I fear I shall hardly be pardoned for deducing the conclusion which follows inevitably. It may not be safe to do more than to suggest a doubt whether a government, founded on the basis of equal political rights and functions, in every member of the community, from the highest to the lowest, can preserve itself from destruction, when applied to a people in that most advanced state of society in which all property is accumulated in the hands of the few, and the starving multitude must beg, and sometimes beg in vain, for leave to toil. To that condition all society tends with a rapidity fearfully hastened by modern discoveries in art and science, and to that state free governments, above all others, tend most rapidly.

The great aim of the political economist, is to urge the advance to that state of things. He speaks to willing pupils, and public spirit and individual cupidity are every where pressing on towards it, with an instinctive eagerness which would seem to show that it is, in itself, desirable. The *desideratum* is, to preserve, in that condition, the same free institutions, which under circumstances less brilliant it is found so easy to establish and administer. The problem indeed is, to devise the means, by which any government can be maintained in the defence of the *rights of all men, in all conditions*, without establishing an inequality of political franchises corresponding to the inequalities of property, and fortifying that inequality by the sword. In France, at this moment, the necessity for this seems to be felt, acknowledged, and acted on. In Great Britain it is felt, it is acknowledged by some, and denied by others—whether it can be successfully acted upon is doubtful—what will be the consequence if it is, is not for man to foresee. There the experiment is going on, which is to decide this question.

The progress of that experiment is not so hopeful as to reconcile other nations to thought of advancing to the same point, and staking their happiness on the result. On the contrary it is the part of wisdom, in a society *having within itself any element*, by the operation of which the *conditions of the problem* may possibly be *varied or modified*, to *study diligently the properties of that element*, and *direct its tendencies*, as far as practicable to *that important object*.

Such an element, as it seems to me, is the Slave population of the Southern States. It is an old observation that the spirit of freedom is no where so high and indomitable as among freemen who are the masters of slaves. The existence of slavery in a community will always keep alive a jealous passion for liberty in the lowest class of those who are not slaves. But it is not in this point of view that I propose to present the subject. It is true that the *spirit of freedom* is thus kept alive, but it is not thus that the *suicidal tendency of freedom* is restrained.

The diligent researches of the British Parliament have furnished the world with a body of evidence, which clearly depicts the condition to which the poorer classes of the most prosperous community are necessarily reduced, in that advanced state of prosperity of which I have just spoken. In this picture we see a state of things full of the causes of revolution, total, bloody and destructive. It presents to the Government the critical alternative of extending the franchises of the suffering class, in order to appease their discontents, or strengthening the arm of power, in order to repress them. If the latter measure be adopted, the expenses of Government and the burthens of the people must be increased; the power, which is given for the purpose of repressing one class, may be dangerous to the liberties of all; and a new energy and increased severity must be imparted to the laws, imposing on all a degree of restraint otherwise unnecessary. To live under a government of laws faithfully administered is indeed to be free, but there is little comfort in freedom, where the law takes cognizance of all we do, and requires us to act by a fixed rule, whether we go out or come in, whether we lie down or rise up. A man feels little like a freeman, when abruptly accosted in the street by a watchman, and rudely questioned, and taken to the watch-house if his account of himself happens not to be satisfactory to the guardian of the night.

Now let it be supposed that the whole of that class of laborers in England, whose condition is worse than that of slaves in our Southern States were actually *NEGRO slaves*, the property of their employers. The necessity of controlling them, and the danger of insurrection would remain; but the means of averting that danger would be altogether different. Let us examine this matter somewhat in detail.

1. The whole system of police contrived to regulate and watch the movements of the laboring class would be superfluous. The authority and discipline of the master would supply its place. That system, in its indiscriminating operation, must often annoy many of those, who are not intended to be affected by it; and the freedom of numbers is unnecessarily restrained, whom the law would leave free if it knew how to distinguish them. But where there are negro slaves, no such mistakes are made. The white man's color is his certificate of freedom, and every master knows his own slaves.

2. The military force, which is kept up in times of profound peace, would be useless, and might be disbanded. At present, it seems indispensable to check the spirit of insurrection excited in the poorer class by their distresses. The effect of this in increasing the power, the patronage, and the influence of the crown, and the burthens of the people is incalculable. Some resort to force might also be necessary in the case I have supposed. But the force, in that case, would be that of private men employed by private men. The expense would fall exclusively on those who ought to bear it. It would be unattended with displays of the insolence of office, and the splendor of rank, to the annoyance of the whole community. Half a dozen armed free laborers would keep the operatives of a large establishment in order, and the assemblage of multitudes from different establishments would be prevented altogether.

3. Whenever an insurrectionary spirit is awakened in the degrading class of free laborers, of which I am now speaking, it is sure of sympathy from the class next above it, a class less numerous perhaps, but far more formidable. Hence the restraints, and discipline, and terrors of the law, are extended to these also. But where would be that nerve of sympathy, if that lowest class were composed of *NEGRO slaves*? And what need would there be of imposing any restraints on what would then be the lowest and poorest class of freemen, which we know to have less sympathy with the Negro than any other?

4. There would be less to provoke to insurrection than there now is, for interest would compel the master to provide for the mere animal wants of his slave. At present, if a laborer is starved off, his employer knows where to find another. The consequence would indeed be a diminution of profits, or rather the fruits of capital and labor combined would be more equally divided between the capitalist and the laborer. But this is precisely what the British Parliament has been trying to effect by legislation, for the last thirty years. They would have the laborer worked less and better paid. Now, if his employer has an interest in his life, he will not work him to death, and will give him necessary food, which is more than the hiring often gets for his wages. I do not mean to deny

that the authority of law might be sometimes necessary to enforce this and other duties of humanity. The law now interferes for the same purpose between the free laborer and his employer. But its vigilance is often baffled, because the laborer must be employed, and will join with the employer to elude the law. If a child under nine years of age is not to work more than eight or ten hours a-day, who shall say that he is not ten years old when he and his parents all say so? But let the slave be made sure of the protection of the law, in complaining of his master (and occasional visits from proper officers would afford him this security,) and he will be sure to claim all the exemptions and advantages that the law allows him. If he is still wronged and maltreated, he may hate his master, but he will love the law that sought to protect him. The grievances of each particular stock of slaves would be their own, and an occasional murder, not a general insurrection would be the consequence. Without the blindest negligence, any thing like concert would be impossible.

5. It should be remembered, that the distresses of the laborers are greatest, and the danger of insurrection is most to be feared, when short crops, or low prices for manufactures raise the price of food, or reduce the wages of labor. But were the laborers slaves, no part of this distress would be felt by them, and no such insurrectionary spirit would be awakened. All the loss, in such cases, would fall, as it ought to fall, not on the laborer but on his employer. Not only would this be right, but it is the very result which the law would accomplish if it could.

Thus far, gentlemen, I think you will see that the exchange of the present free labor of Great Britain for that of an equal number of negro slaves, would save the community from heavy burthens and oppressive laws, and the government from the danger which at every moment threatens it. But would it not also make it safe to extend the political privileges of the people, and to grant a share in the government to some who are now, most wisely, disfranchised? The temptation of the lower classes to abuse political power would be much diminished, and the presence of a class lower than all, and more numerous than all, of a different race, and requiring equally the concert and coöperation of all for its safe control and management, would be a prominent point on which all other classes would act together in a common spirit and in perfect harmony. I do not mean to say that even that would render universal suffrage expedient or just; but the mischiefs of universal suffrage would be different in character and less in degree.

They would be different in character, for all would dread the consequences which might attend insurrection, or follow any insurrectionary movement. Any evil not intolerable would be endured, in preference to the danger of letting loose an ene-

my so formidable, as, in *such a state of things*, the slave population might become. The preservation of order and harmony among the free classes would be an object of paramount interest with all, for it would be necessary to the safety of all.

The danger of universal suffrage would be less in degree. The classes absolutely destitute of property in England, at this moment, very far outnumber all the rest. To let in universal suffrage, therefore, would be a signal for confiscation, and a general partition of property, such as took place in France fifty years ago. But take away the whole of that lowest class, in comparison with whose abject condition that of our slaves is a state of freedom and happiness, and, though perhaps the holders of property might still be outnumbered, it is probable that a little address and management might be sufficient to preserve the balance of authority.

But there is a danger of an opposite character. Even if we suppose the newly enfranchised multitude to continue to respect the rights of property, they can never be insensible to its value. If the laborers in the employment of a great manufacturer did not succeed in stripping him of his property by agrarian legislation, they would remain the same dependent beings that they now are, and he whose right of suffrage is now limited to his own vote, would then carry to the polls his thousand retainers, and give law to the county or corporation to which he belonged.

This last, gentlemen, is precisely the danger to be apprehended from universal suffrage in communities like our own. The desperate measures of agrarian misrule and confiscation, and plunder by the authority of law are not to be apprehended where the wages of labor are so high, the means of subsistence so cheap, and the facility of acquiring landed property so great as among us. The poorest man in society feels an interest in those laws which protect the rights of property, for, though he has none as yet, he has the purpose and the hope to be rich before he dies, and to leave property to his children. But this purpose and this hope do but render him more sensible to the temptations of interest. They whet his appetite for gain, and the desire of acquisition, instead of being an occasional want of his nature, which may be appeased and forgotten, becomes a permanent and inveterate craving. The man who labors from day to day for food and raiment, with no hope of bettering his condition, when he has earned his meal, eats it, and is satisfied.

"He, with a body filled and vacant mind,  
Gets him to rest, crammed with distressful bread:  
Never sees horrid Night, that child of Hell;  
But like a lacquey, from the rise to the set,  
Sweats in the eye of Phœbus, and all night  
Sleeps in Elysium. Next day after dawn,  
Doth rise and help Hyperion to his horse,  
And follows thus the ever-running year  
With profitable labor to his grave."

This is the character and condition of the

laborer, who can never expect to be any thing else, as sketched by the Great Master of nature. All who are familiar with the character of the Southern slave, will see how just is this description as applied to him; and the resemblance may be taken as a proof, if any be wanting, that the *substance* of slavery is all—the form nothing. The man who works and *must work*, from morn till night for *food* and *raiment*, without *hope* of *change*, is a slave. It matters not how he became so: by what authority his servitude is imposed; by what necessity it is maintained.

The character of the man, however humble, whose labors are stimulated and directed by the hope of future affluence, is widely different. Hence, in a community where such is the condition of the lowest class, you find neither the proverbial generosity of the beggar, nor the careless apathy so well described by Shakspeare. Every man is alert and keen in the pursuit of gain, and the love of money, instead of being regarded as a sordid and degrading passion, is numbered among the virtues. *There are those who teach it to their children as a duty, and they learn to look on extortion and fraud, and corruption and bribes, but as means which may be sanctified by the good end to be accomplished.* It is proverbial that avarice is an appetite which grows by feeding, and the sure returns of prosperity, that reward all sorts of exertion in a free and growing country, explain the fact, that in such a country the love of money becomes a master passion, governing society through all its classes.

In such a community it is indispensable to check, in some way, the dangerous influence of wealth. This is acknowledged by all; but they differ widely about the means. Universal suffrage is the remedy which, almost every where, throughout the United States has been rashly adopted. Its advocates affect to consider the land as being the thing represented, wherever the right of suffrage is restricted to freeholders; and dabblers in political arithmetic pretend to have found out, that if the owner of twenty-five acres ought to have one vote, consistency demands that a hundred votes should be assigned to him who owns twenty-five hundred acres. This miserable sophism,—this mockery of a *reductio ad absurdum*, suffices to cheat many who utter, and more who hear it. If indeed the object of the advocates of such restriction were to increase the influence of wealth, there would be reason in the suggestion. But the way to accomplish that object, is by the use of a much less invidious device. *Make suffrage universal*, and let the owner of a large estate divide it among a hundred leaseholders, and it will be effectually attained under the cheating pretence of allowing an equal voice to every man. In that way, the landlord, in a community without slaves, would give the votes not only of his tenants, but of his

menials and laborers. As it is, it is perfectly notorious, that the wealthiest landed proprietor, in a slave-holding community, does not derive from his landed estate the means of influencing the vote of a single freeholder. Some influence over men of that description is indeed occasionally exercised by men of wealth; but it is the influence of the creditor over his debtor, the influence of the merchant over his indiscreet customer, the influence of the usurer over his wretched victim. Examples of this sort I have seen, and if they prove any thing, they prove, that, as a safeguard against this influence, some farther qualification, besides the possession of a small freehold should be required. But the statesman should be satisfied with a qualification, which, *in general*, secures the independence of the voter although, in very rare instances, it may be found inadequate. But while we see examples of this sort, it becomes us to consider what would be the effect, if no qualification were required.

The argument is susceptible of being so presented as to wear something of the aspect of mathematical demonstration. The evil to be avoided is the undue influence of wealth in elections. Wealth is comparative, and the influence it exerts will depend on the difference between the wealth of him who wields this influence, and that of him who is to be governed by it. The greater the difference the greater will be the means of this mischievous influence, and, over him whose circumstances place him in a state of dependence on another, it is absolute. There is perhaps no community in which the number of persons so circumstanced does not exceed the number of men of small but independent property. Hence, if suffrage be universal, and the wealthy combine themselves, *as a class*, to accomplish any favorable objects they can have no difficulty in commanding the votes necessary for their purpose. But restrict the right of suffrage to men of independent, though moderate landed estate, and whenever the wealthy propose to themselves any thing favorable to their own peculiar interests they will find themselves in a minority.

Thus it appears that the freehold qualification of the voter, instead of being one of the franchises of wealth, is in fact the most effectual check upon its undue and dangerous influence. It is thus disarmed of its most formidable weapon. The rich man will still possess an influence over his dependents, but he can not use it for political purposes. He goes alone to the polls, and gives his single vote, which is overwhelmed by those of the small freeholders who border on his extensive property, while, perhaps, he has ten times that number of humble and devoted dependents, whose suffrages he could command, if they had suffrages to give.

In short, gentlemen, he who would place the right of suffrage on such a basis as to afford security against the undue influence of wealth, will attain his object if he can ascertain the precise

qualification which will secure a majority of voters rich enough to be above corrupt influence, and poor enough to give more of their sympathies to the poor than to the rich.

It is the remark of a most profound thinker that no people ever set about reducing the qualification of the voter without going on to universal suffrage. The tendency seems irresistible. In every controversy in which the poorest class of voters happens to be outnumbered, the thought occurs to them that they would be more successful in future if they could introduce to the polls a few recruits from the class next below them. The rich man, on his part, may believe, that, among the lower class, he might find a larger proportion susceptible of corrupt and sordid influence than is to be found among the qualified voters. With opposite views, therefore, men of both classes combine to reduce the qualification. The Demagogue perceives the working of these considerations on the minds of others, and anticipates that they will prevail in the end. He seeks therefore to make the votes of the class about to be enfranchised his own, and, with that view, puts himself forward as the advocates of their claims. The change becomes daily more probable—it becomes almost certain, and then many who deprecate and dread it are eager to disarm the evil of part of its mischief by affecting to desire it. Thus it is finally introduced, with a semblance of unanimity, and each extension of the franchise thus renders farther extensions more and more certain. The more formidable the class desiring to be admitted to the polls—the greater the danger that they will abuse their franchise, the more certain is the success of their claims.

No man conversant with the change, which the alteration in the Constitution of Virginia has made in the composition of her legislature, can think with satisfaction of the effect of such an extension of the right of suffrage as would embrace the whole of her present free population. But great as that evil would be, it would be nothing to the mischief of a constituent body embracing not only these, but the whole of the abject class that must come in to take the place of the slaves if they were withdrawn. From that worst evil, from that fatal and irreparable abuse of the theory of Democracy we are saved by the existence of domestic slavery among us; and I must indeed be convinced that it is a sin, deeper and deadlier than those who most revile us consider it, before I should consent to relinquish the security it affords against a state of things, which must end in anarchy or despotism.

The morality of the institution I shall leave to the vindication I have already offered. My present purpose is to consider how it may aid us in working the difficult and complicated problem of self-government. In this the puzzle is to contrive such restraints on the sovereign will of a free people as may be necessary to the preservation of

their free institutions, without annihilating the freedom they are meant to secure. The Spartans preserved their political liberty by condemning themselves to discipline as stern as that of the most rigorous personal slavery. This absurdity we should endeavor to avoid, but when we have done all we can, there is a seeming paradox in the idea of self-imposed restraints on the right of self-government. But the necessity of the thing is not the less certain. There is and must be an element in every society, which can only be restrained to its proper place and withheld from mischief by coercion. If there is strength enough in the frame of Government to make this coercion effectual, that strength may be dangerous to the freedom of all. But if society is so organized that the element in question can be restrained and directed by other energies than those of government, we escape the difficulty.

"Society," says Burke, the most profound of political philosophers, "can not exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere." If it be in the frame of *Government*, its operation may be annoying to some on whom it is not necessary to impose restraint. If it be in the frame of *society* itself, it may be dispensed with in that of Government; and they whose virtue and intelligence qualify them to live exempt from such control may be left in perfect freedom. None but a very presumptuous and unscrupulous man would go so far as to introduce domestic slavery with this view, on the strength of any reasoning *a priori*. But I account him rash, who, finding it established in the community into which he was born, should carry his regard to the abstract idea of equal right so far as to throw away, *at this day*, when the props and pillars of Government in all civilized nations are shaken, a security which such reasoning, backed by experience, shows to be so favorable to the harmonious combination of *Order and Freedom*.

To show the value of this element in our society, let me lay before you a passage from De Tocqueville's work on Democracy in America, in which he describes the political and social condition of the community as seen by him in the Northern States.

"At the present day," says he, "the more affluent classes of society are so entirely removed from the direction of affairs in the United States, that wealth, far from conferring a right to the exercise of power, is rather an obstacle than a means of attaining to it. The wealthy members of the community abandon the lists, through unwillingness to contend, and frequently to contend in vain, against the lowest class of their fellow citizens. They concentrate all their enjoyments in the privacy of their homes, where they occupy a rank that can not be assumed in public; and they constitute a private society in the State, which has its own tastes and

its own pleasures. They submit to this state of affairs as an irremediable evil, but they are careful not to show that they are galled by its continuance: it is not even uncommon to hear them laud the delights of a republican government, and the advantages of democratic institutions, when they are in public. Next to hating their enemies, men are most inclined to flatter them.

"Mark, for instance, that opulent citizen, *who is as anxious as a Jew of the middle ages*, to conceal his wealth. His dress is plain, his demeanor unassuming, but the interior of his dwelling glitters with luxury, and none but a few chosen guests, whom he haughtily styles his equals, are permitted to penetrate into this sanctuary. No European noble is more exclusive in his pleasures, or more jealous of all the advantages which his privileged station confers upon him. But the very same individual crosses the city to reach a dark counting house in the centre of trade where every one may accost him who pleases. If he meets his cobbler on the way, they stop and converse; the two citizens discuss the affairs of the State, in which they have an equal interest, and they shake hands before they part.

"But beneath this artificial enthusiasm and these obsequious attentions to the preponderating power, it is easy to see that the wealthy members of the community entertain a hearty distaste to the institutions of their country. The populace is at once the object of their scorn and of their fears. If the maladministration of the democracy ever brings about a revolutionary crisis, and if monarchical institutions ever become practicable in the United States, the truth of what I advance will become obvious."

This passage is full of fearful meaning to those whom it concerns. Whether it is true in its application to the Northern States, where the observations of the writer were made, it is certainly not true that any such state of things exists among us in the South. Had M. De Tocqueville come among us, he would have seen the difference, and what he here predicates of the whole union would have been applied only to one section.

It amounts to this—that, while the poorer classes are secure in the enjoyment of all their rights, except so far as they may be endangered by their own caprices, the wealthier have not the same immunity. The right to fill that place in society to which the merit of the individual entitles him, and the right to discharge those public functions for which he is better qualified than other men, are indeed but imperfect rights. But they are still rights; and the latter is one which no people denies without injustice to the party, and detriment to itself. These rights, according to De Tocqueville, are not recognized in the land of free labor and universal suffrage. The passion for display, contemptible as it is, is one of those the gratification of which men propose to themselves, in the pur-

suit of wealth; but this, it seems, they hardly feel it safe to indulge to the utmost. To those who have had occasion to observe the force of that passion, it belongs to calculate the energy of any cause that has power to repress it. De Tocqueville likens the case to that of the Jews of the middle ages. These consented to possess their wealth in this state of imperfect enjoyment, and when we think of the tyrannical princes and rapacious nobles, who regarded them as their prey, we perceive a force sufficient to secure their tameness in this abject condition. The power which enforces the like submission to the like degradation in the Northern States, may be less palpable, but, perhaps, not less formidable. Men, who thus submit, display a consciousness that they hold, by sufferance, the rights which they are permitted to enjoy, and it is to preserve these that the rest are surrendered.

The gifts of Providence are most unjustly distributed if the acquisition of riches does not afford, at least, *prima facie* evidence of merit of some sort. We disparage too the advantages of free Government, if we deny that when all the avenues to prosperity are open to all, the industrious, enterprising, vigilant and enlightened are most apt to win the prize. Is there not then something radically wrong, when those who have given such indications of the qualities by which the public may be best served, are forthwith stigmatized and put under political disabilities, as a class? Is not this unjust to them and detrimental to the State? May we not be permitted to doubt whether the affairs of any people can be wisely administered, who thus, by a sweeping disqualification, discard from their service, not the ignorant, the abject and the depraved, but the wise, the prudent and the sagacious? This may be right, if the affairs of a nation will be most wisely administered by the ignorant; if the reign of Virtue will be best secured by the authority of the vicious; and if the elements of happiness will be most carefully and successfully cultivated by those who are strangers to that essential happiness whose seat is in the mind. But is there not something radically false in that which overturns the empire of Reason, inverts the order of natural society, dethrones the MIND of the community from its just supremacy, and assigns the tasks of thought to the unthinking, and the authority of law to those who should be the subjects of its corrective discipline?

Again; can we cheat ourselves into the belief that there is perfect liberty, and with it the security that gives to liberty its charm and chief value, where they who succeed, by honest means, in winning the rewards of meritorious enterprise, are made to feel that they hold them by an uncertain tenure, and must be content to forego half their enjoyments, or sacrifice some of their rights, and incur the risk of losing all? If it be true, as De

Tocqueville supposes, "that the wealthier members of these communities entertain a hearty distaste to the democratic institutions of their country," is there no danger to these institutions to be apprehended from that cause? Will wealth make no attempt, abortive though it must be, to secure itself, by political privileges, in its appropriate enjoyments? Will it be content to hold them by an uncertain tenure, while there is any hope of putting restraints on the rapacity that threatens it? Will a hungry multitude submit to such restraints? And will not a struggle ensue between those who would impose and those who resist them, such as has never terminated but in a short-lived anarchy followed by the rule of a Despot? If these things be so, they who have gone on to work out the problem of theoretical Democracy, to its most extreme results, may have reason to suspect that they might wisely have stopped short of absolute perfection. To say no more, it might be doubted whether a constitutional disqualification of a class, which, taken collectively, may be regarded as ignorant, thriftless and depraved, would not be better than the practical disqualification of another class, which, by a judgment founded on the most legitimate presumptions, may be considered collectively as wise, prudent and virtuous.

I have already said, that, if M. De Tocqueville had come among us in the South Atlantic States, he would have seen nothing of this. He might have found something offensive to his democratic taste as reminding him of a privileged Aristocracy in other countries. But his philosophical eye would have looked below the surface, and he would have seen, that there is, in truth, no Aristocracy, because there are no political privileges. He would have seen no class of men, perhaps no single man cherishing "a hearty distaste to the institutions of his country." He would have seen, moreover, that this is so because there is no class that does not feel itself secure, not only in the possession, but in the fullest enjoyment of all its rights, whether original or acquired. He would have seen that this is so, because of the existence of an institution, which makes it impossible that the strife for political power should ever be exasperated by hunger, and makes all men in all conditions alike safe; "the high from the blights of Envy, the low from the iron sway of Tyranny and Oppression." He would have seen why it is, that universal suffrage fails to produce among us the same effect which it produces elsewhere: why is it, that the poor man here is not ashamed to manifest his gratitude to a wealthy benefactor, by a devoted attachment to his person, and a sense of his private virtues by readiness to commit to him the functions of public office. He would have seen that this is so, because universal suffrage introduces to the polls but a small number of those who have not a feeling sense of the importance and sanctity of the rights of pro-

perty, and do not cherish a prevailing desire for their security. He would have seen that this too is but an effect, and that the cause is domestic slavery. The deep seated repugnance of that benevolent man to slavery, in any form, might make him hesitate to admit that any good could flow from such a source. But his candid mind might reflect that there is nothing perfect in the institutions of man, or in any of the works of his hand; and he might arrive at the conclusion, that this state of things is at least as good as that in which property is driven by the desire of security, to war against freedom, and numbers are excited by rapacity, or the fear of oppression to war against property. He must have seen, that our condition, such as it is, promises permanency; and he would hardly have denied that it is better than the anarchy and consequent despotism in which the other never fails to end.

I beg you to remember, gentlemen, that I have but proposed to consider how far this institution is capable of being used as a remedy for that distemper of the body politic, which, if not the natural and necessary end of all good government, is, at least, the prevailing epidemic of the day. That it will be so used, when the time to test its value shall arrive, I hardly dare to hope. The desire of gain will not permit it. As society approaches that point at which labor becomes a drug, mammon will hardly fail to hint to the master that he might do better, first to emancipate, and then to hire his slave. The political economist will be at hand to back the suggestion, and to prove by calculation, and to show by statistical tables that the full resources of a country can never be developed by servile hands. These truths are indeed susceptible of rigid and palpable demonstration, and they will probably prevail; and States, which have hitherto loitered in the race of wealth and improvement, will spring forward with renewed vigor, and, each in turn, and in due time, will find themselves, like the Eastern Caliph, in that hall of Eblis, where, in the midst of pomp and splendor, a consuming fire will prey upon the heart of the body politic.

Yet would I fondly cherish the thought that the people of the Southern States, checked in their career by the presence of an element in their society which is certainly not favorable to their advance toward this disastrous consummation, may learn its value before it be too late. The tie that binds the heart of the master to his slave is every day gaining strength. The calm domestic tranquillity, and the sense of security which he enjoys in his reliance on the humble and faithful friends that surround him, are every day becoming more precious. He is every day less and less disposed to exchange the cheerful, unbought, unforced obedience of willing hands and loving hearts for the hired service of domestic spies: to exchange the

hereditary tie which has come down from generation to generation, for occasional contracts from month to month establishing between those who yesterday were strangers and to-morrow may be enemies, an intercourse the most confidential, and relations the most intimate. Why should he make the exchange? Every day brings tidings of the disasters attending it elsewhere, and the most prosperous States in the world are every day furnishing evidence to prove that wealth is not abundance, that prosperity is not happiness, and that discipline and subordination, however rigid, can not always secure order and tranquillity. Why should he make the exchange? Is it because others can not understand the relation he bears to his slave, and he has none but his own heart to witness the benevolence and equity that preside over it. Must he hang his head and hide his face with shame, when he hears others declaim against "the wrong and outrage with which earth is filled?" He has none such to answer for. Does his heart reproach him, when he hears the indignant descant of England's purest moral bard;

"I would not have a slave to till my ground,  
To carry me, to fan me while I sleep,  
And tremble when I wake, for all the wealth  
That sinews bought and sold have ever earned."

And who would? Would I? Would you? Would you? Would any man in this presence? There may be some who would; and if there be, no where are they so detested as in the slave-holding country; and if among us here there be one whose heart, more than any other, cherishes and echoes the sentiment of the poet, that man is a slave holder. Is it not enough for us that we are conscious of living in obedience to the law of Love, which, in whatever form it be cast, is the law of perfect Liberty? Should we not indeed rejoice and exult that it has been given to us to solve the difficulty of reconciling subordination with freedom, by restoring that beautiful harmony, in which Power is gentle, and Obedience liberal, and the will of the superior prevails, because it is the delight of the inferior to know and do it? "Is it such a mystery," says one\* "than whom none lives more devoted to the cause of Liberty and Humanity;" is it such a mystery to reconcile Despotism with Freedom? It is to make your Despotism *just*. *Rigorous as Destiny*, but *just too as Destiny*; and its law, the laws of God. All men obey these; and have no freedom but in obeying them."

But we may loiter and fall behind in the race of improvement and refinement! And what of that? Does improvement heal the sick, or clothe the naked, or feed the hungry; or does it increase the multitude of sufferers and their miseries? What is it but a medicine for the whole, who need no physic, which leaves untended the wounds and bruises and putrifying sores of afflicted

millions? And *Refinement*! What is that but, the new sauce, which the pampered Roman Emperor so much coveted to stimulate his jaded appetite? What does it accomplish for the poor and needy, the proper objects of that benevolence which interferes on behalf of our slaves? What is it indeed but an alembic, in which the blood and sweat of thousands are distilled into one drop of concentrated enjoyment, for the use of those whose cup is full to overflowing, and whose capacity for enjoyment is already gorged to loathing?

"O! Fortunati nimium, sua si bona norint!"

My countrymen let no man deceive you. You have been chosen as the instrument, in the hand of God, for accomplishing the great purpose of his benevolence, according to a plan devised by his wisdom, and proclaimed in his word. You are in possession of every thing needful to your physical, intellectual and moral nature. There is enough of luxury for the health of either body or mind; there is comfort of a high order for the great body of society, and there is abundance for all. Besides this, and more than this, you have domestic peace, and security, and harmony, and love. You live under the discipline of a social system, by which the mind is informed, and the heart made better, and you have all the leisure necessary for intellectual and moral culture. You have all the elements of Happiness, and all the incentives to Virtue.

You have, moreover, a constitution of society, which makes the tasks of Government easy, leaving no pretext to ambition, and no motive to misrule. Preserve that, and you will find no difficulty in preserving the institutions bequeathed by your ancestors, and perpetuating a form of Government under which all are free, and none so free as those the world calls slaves. Study the capabilities and the imperfections of the system. Cultivate the one and reform the other. Make the slave secure, and make him feel himself secure from the envious insolence of degraded freemen, and the petty vexations of a superfluous police. Make the hand of the master strong to protect him from all injustice; and leave the rest to his own sense of interest, and to the kindly working of the best affections of the human heart.

Gentlemen; I have spoken as in the presence of the searcher of hearts. I have testified to nothing which I do not know to be true. I have uttered no sentiment which I do not feel to be just: I have offered no argument which I do not believe to be sound. I plead before you, the cause, not only of the master, but of the slave. I beseech you; I beseech the whole civilized world to leave us to execute as we may the task to which we have been appointed, and to work out unmolested an experiment, on which the temporal and eternal welfare of so many millions of human beings depend.

\* Carlyle.