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

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SLAVERY.


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It is impossible to look attentively and understandingly on those phenomena that indicate public sentiment in regard to the subject of these works, without deep and anxious interest. "Nulla vestigia retrorsum," is a saying fearfully applicable to what is called the "march of mind." It is unquestionable truth. The absolute and palpable impossibility of ever unlearning what we know, and of returning, even by forgetfulness, to
the state of mind in which the knowledge of it first
found us, has always afforded flattering encouragement
to the hopes of him who dreams about the perfectibility
of human nature. Sometimes one scheme, and som-
times another is devised for accomplishing this great
end; and these means are so various, and often so op-
posite, that the different experiments which the world
has condescended to undertake seem to lead the man-
ners of which every son of Adam is to become holy, "even
as God is holy." One or the other of these schemes has
been a cardinal point in every system of perfectibility
which has been devised since the carliest records of man's
history began. At the same time the progress of know-
lledge (subject indeed to occasional interruptions) has
given to each successive experiment a seeming advan-
cage over that which preceded it.
But it is a law of nature, that let research dis-
cover, let science teach, let art practice what it may, man,
in all his mutations, never fails to get back to some
point at which he has been before. The human
mind seems to perform, by some invariable laws, a sort
of cycle, like those of the heavenly bodies. We may
be unable, (and, for ourselves, we profess to be so) to
trace the causes of these changes; but we are not sure
that an accurate observation of the history of various
nations at different times, may not detect the laws that
govern them. Hence, while the human chain in the
heavens enables the enlightened astronomer to anticipate
its future course, to tell when it will pass its
perihelion, in what direction it will shoot away into
the unformidable abyss of infinite space, and at what
period it will return. But what especially concerns
us, is to mark its progress through our planetary
system, to determine whether in coming or returning
it may infringe upon us, and prove the messenger
of which, in the end of all things, is to wrap our earth in flames.
Not less eccentric, and far more deeply interesting to us, is the orbit of the human mind. If, as some have
supposed, the comet—in its upward flight is drawn away
by the attraction of some other sun, around which also
it bends its course, thus linking another system first
triumph achieved was in the emancipation of slaves.
In the generation which followed, the system of the
culture of mankind spread, and secure this enjoyment, are preferred.

In the calm, and, as we would call it, the beneficent
condition of the public mind, when every man worships
God after his own manner, and Religion and its duties
are left to his conscience and his Maker, we find each
quietly enjoying his own property, and permitting to
others the same enjoyment of theirs. Under that state
of things, those modes and forms of liberty which regu-
late and secure this enjoyment, are preferred. Peace
reigns, the arts flourish, science extends her discoveries,
and man, and the sources of his enjoyments, are multi-
plied. But in this condition the statesmen are not rest. We have
already disclaimed any knowledge of the causes which
forthwith—we only know that such exist. We know that
men are always passing, with fearful rapidity, between the extremes of fanaticism and irreligion, and
that at either extreme, property and all the government
machinery provided to guard it, become insecure.
"Down with the Church! Down with the Altar!" is
at one time the cry. "Turn the fat bigots out of
their eyes, sell the property of the Church and give the
money to the poor!" Behold our two comets," says
the Millenarian. "The kingdoms of this world are
about to become the kingdoms of God and of his Christ.
Sell what you have and give to the poor, and let all
things be in common!"
It is now about two hundred years since this latter
spirit showed itself in England with a violence and
extravagance which accomplished the overthrow of all
the institutions of that kingdom. With that we have
nothing to do; but we should suppose that the striking
resemblance between the aspect of a certain party in
that country then and now, could hardly escape the
attention of the multitude for others calls itself
the spirit of liberty.
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circumstances between individuals "of the white race, see! the dying infant in the lap of its nurse, and have
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the eye of man could distinguish. And he who sees the
hearts—did he see dissimulation giving energy to the
choking sobs that seemed to be rendered more vehement
by her attempts to repress them? Philanthropy may
think so if it pleases.

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

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

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

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

We hope the day has gone by when we are to be
judged by the testimony of false, interested, and malig-
nant accusers alone. We repeat that we are thankful
to Mr. Paulding for having stepped forward in our de-
fence. Our assailants are numerous, and it is indis-
ensible that we should meet the assault with vigor
and activity. Nothing is wanting but manly discussion
to convince our own people at least, that in continuing
to command the servants of their slaves, they violate no
law divine or human, and that in the faithful discharge
of their reciprocal obligations lies their true duty. Let
these be performed, and we believe (with our esteemed
correspondent Professor Dew) that society in the South
will derive much more of good than of evil from this
much abused and partially-considered institution.