

A  
PORTRAITURE  
OF  
**DOMESTIC SLAVERY,**

IN THE  
UNITED STATES:

WITH  
REFLECTIONS ON THE PRACTICABILITY OF RESTORING THE  
MORAL RIGHTS OF THE SLAVE, WITHOUT IMPAIRING  
THE LEGAL PRIVILEGES OF THE POSSESSOR;

AND  
A PROJECT OF A COLONIAL ASYLUM  
FOR FREE PERSONS OF COLOUR:

INCLUDING  
*MEMOIRS OF FACTS ON THE INTERIOR TRAFFIC IN SLAVES,*

AND ON  
**KIDNAPPING.**

ILLUSTRATED WITH ENGRAVINGS.

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**BY JESSE TORREY, JUN. PHYSICIAN:**  
Author of a *Series* of Essays on Morals and the Diffusion of Knowledge.

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**PHILADELPHIA:**  
**PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.**

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1817.

DISTRICT OF PENNSYLVANIA, to wit:

*Be it remembered*, That on the twenty-fifth day of January, in the forty-first year of the Independence of the United States of America, A. D. 1817, **JESSE TORREY, Jun.** Physician, of the said district, hath deposited in this office the title of a Book, the right whereof he claims as Author, in the words following, to wit:

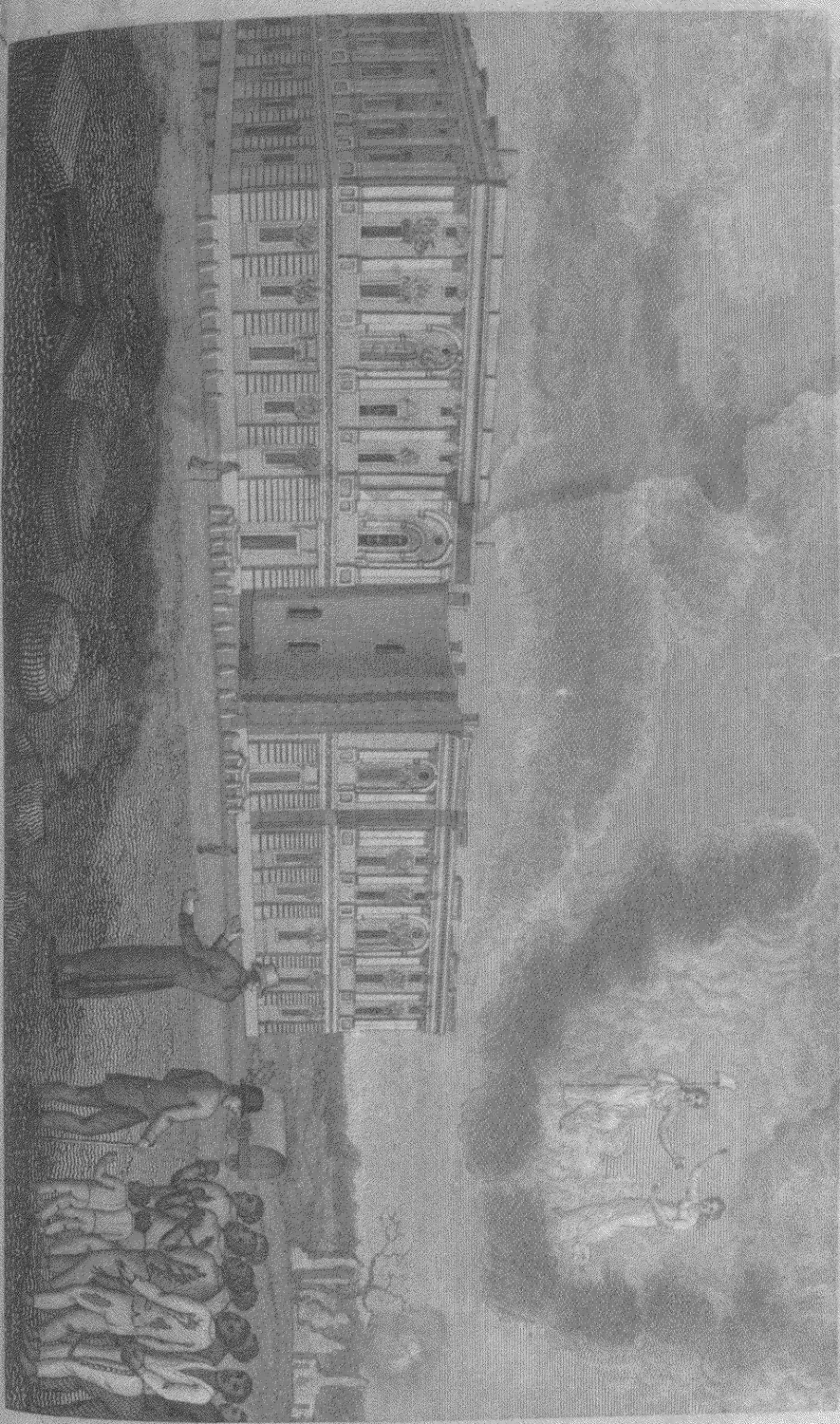
“A Portraiture of Domestic Slavery, in the United States: with reflections on the practicability of restoring the moral rights of the Slave, without impairing the legal privileges of the possessor; and a Project of a Colonial Asylum for Free Persons of Colour: including Memoirs of Facts on the interior Traffic in Slaves, and on Kidnapping. Illustrated with Engravings. By Jesse Torrey, jun. Physician. Author of a Series of Essays on Morals and the Diffusion of Knowledge.”

In conformity to the act of the congress of the United States, intituled, “An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned.” And also to the act, entitled “An act supplementary to an act, entitled ‘An act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of maps, charts, and books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned.’ and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other prints.”

**D. CALDWELL,**

Clerk of the District of Pennsylvania.

*TO the candid consideration of Philanthropists,  
Legislators, and Possessors of Slaves, the following  
Essay is respectfully submitted, by the Author, with-  
out offering any apology for pleading the cause of  
an injured and despised race of men, except the  
consciousness of being himself, A MAN.*



## PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

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IT is generally acknowledged by men of candor and prudence, that persecution and intolerance add strength to error, and that corrosive irritating epithets tend to defeat the object of liberal discussion,—the conviction of truth. Nor can it produce any valuable end, for one frail member of the same fraternity, to attack another, with a volley of threats and predictions of the curses and vengeance of their common Father.

Possessors of Slaves have been frequently menaced with the visitation of some tremendous and sudden burst of Divine wrath. If such an instance has existed, it has occurred so seldom, and with such protracted forbearance, that they have generally regarded it as a casualty, and have not been deterred from persisting in the custom of retaining possession of their slaves. It is, however, an incontrovertible theorem, that the sentinels of Divine justice, are seldom trespassed upon, without regular and appropriate retribution, in some shape, and at some time or other.

The Author will not be surprised if he shall be charged with presumption, in meddling with a subject which has already occupied the most profound reflections of the most eminent philanthropists and statesmen. He is sensible that an attempt, in the present epoch of moral advancement, to prove the injustice and cruelty of the African Slave Trade, is entirely unnecessary. Every truly civilized nation has already denounced and discarded it. But its effects, whether they partake of a like character with their cause or not, still exist. Domestic Slavery, however noxious a weed to the tree of liberty, has taken deep root in this highly favoured country;—and men become *slaveholders and slaves by inheritance*, without any exercise of their own wills, and are compelled, (for the present) to remain so, by the coercive mandates of *human laws*! And who shall we blame? Or is it not of more importance to seek an antidote to a dangerous disease, than to indulge in execrations against its authors?—As much as the melancholy condition of the slaves is to be deplored, but little less do their masters claim the sympathy of the philanthropist, who is capable of perceiving the certainty of specific moral effects, from specific moral causes.

The Author's chief solicitude is to convince the possessors of slaves, that the laws do not compel them to be tyrants, (as a worthy gentleman of that class of citizens has

intimated) but that it is in their power, and will best promote their *own* interests, both pecuniary and moral, to civilize and instruct that inoffensive and helpless race of people, whose lot has been cast under their guardianship; —to be patrons, benefactors,—*neighbours* to them—and view them and use them, as constituting a portion of the admirable works of the same beneficent and omnipresent Parent, Overseer, and Proprietor, of us all; *by, and in whom, we all live, breathe, and have our being.*

*Philadelphia, Nov. 21, 1816.*

## PORTRAITURE OF SLAVERY,

&c.

MANY schemes have been proposed for alleviating the miseries and evils produced by the enslavement of the African race in the United States. Possessors of slaves, as well as others, have investigated the subject with great industry and anxiety; and all agree that something ought to be done. The suggestion of an infallible remedy is useless, if it be impossible to attain or apply it. Exportation to Africa, (the country to which the wisdom of their Creator has adapted their colour and faculties;) separate colonization on the public lands; employment on national canals, roads, &c. have been recommended. These projects are most certainly impracticable, except partially;—because their completion would require the *voluntary* estrangement by its legal holders, of an immense quantity and value of what is generally though erroneously termed *property*—human liberty.\* And in the present moral and intellectual condition of the slaves, the result would be perhaps of doubtful benefit.

In examining this subject, I shall endeavour to be temperate, and to avoid indulging in the use of reprehensive acrimonious modes of expression.

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\* The liberty of the black population in but a single state, is estimated at about thirty millions of dollars.



Without the most distant inclination to aggravate the feelings of any individual, but because "we ought not to shrink from the investigation of truth, however unpopular, nor conceal it whatever the profession of it may cost,"\* a concise sketch will be presented, of the facts and incidents which have prompted this address. The peculiar connexion with which some of these occurrences succeeded each other, was certainly extraordinary, and to those who are not incredulous, may seem astonishing.

The first opportunity that ever occurred to me, of viewing a slave plantation, was furnished by a journey during the summer of 1815, from Pittsburg to the city of Washington. In the course of my route I travelled through part of Virginia, west of the Blue Ridge, by way of Winchester, and through part of Maryland by way of Fredericktown, on the east side.

My first contemplation of the magnificent edifice, towering over the surrounding clusters of huts, and the extensive fields, impressed an idea of their similarity to the castles of European princes, dukes, lords, barons, &c. with the cottages of their tenants. But a closer consideration led me to this unavoidable conclusion: that these splendid fabrics are virtually the palaces of hereditary absolute monarchs;—that the laborers and people over whom they reign, are their lawful subjects or vassals—constituting *kingdoms in miniature*;—with this difference from eastern monarchies, that the king here, instead of receiving merely a revenue from his subjects, has *legitimate* power, (if he is disposed to avail himself of it,) to exercise the most unlimited and tyrannical despotism† over their persons, and to extort the *whole* of the products of their industry, except what may be indispensable to prevent starvation.

\* Governor Miller's message to the legislature of North Carolina in 1815.

† "Political subordination, however hateful to a liberal mind, is as bright as day when compared with the dark and hopeless bondage of the Negro."

It is not my intention by any means, to intimate that every possessor of slaves must necessarily be a Nero, but that, if he chooses to be one, there exists no earthly political power to prevent him. Excess of power, like other unnatural stimulants, exerts a deleterious and an intoxicating influence upon the human mind, which but few possess the capacity and firmness to withstand. In tracing the endless catalogues of kings, presented in history, how seldom is the eye dazzled with transport at the name of an Alfred. There are, undoubtedly, Alfreds among these numerous *states*; but as long as the diffusion of the humanizing principles of pure religion, and the auxiliary lights of natural, moral, and political philosophy, continues to be limited to its present boundaries, it is feared the number of Alfreds will remain comparatively small.

The rod of a tyrant wielded over a few, is infinitely more terrible, than when the number of its victims is great, and detached over a wide extent of country.\*

Mr. Jefferson, in his Note on this subject, exclaims, "I tremble for my country, when I reflect that God is just; and that his justice cannot sleep forever." The late Professor Barton, in his work on Botany, while treating on the article of *rice* and its cultivation by uncompensated slaves, expresses a similar sentiment. "Shall we never

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\* Since writing the above, I have been favoured with the perusal of a letter from the brother of the late Governor of the State of Delaware, to his friend in Philadelphia, dated Lewes, November 27, 1816, in which, after mentioning the arrest of a banditti of kidnappers, &c. he relates the following narrative.

"A melancholy catastrophe has recently occurred here. A pilot, who owned a young black man, last Thursday morning, when in the bay off here, for some small offence, struck him three or four times with a rope's end; his man observed, "master, you have promised whenever I am unwilling to serve you, that I might choose another master, I now want to leave you." Very well, replied the master, but I will settle with you first, pull off your shirt, and signified or said he would beat him until sun-set. His man replied, I will die first, and immediately jumped overboard and drowned himself."

learn (says he) to be just to our fellow creatures? Shall we blindly pursue the imaginary advantages of the moment, and neglect the still but solemn voice of God, until

“———— Vengeance in the lurid air,  
Lifts her red arm expos'd and bare.”

Without offering an opinion on the propriety of the expression of Mr. Jefferson, I must add, that *I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just*, and that his justice is ever active and continually executing its commission! The truth of this may be easily recognised by any observer who has not been familiarised to the constant presence of slavery, from infancy. Indeed, the possessors of slaves, with whom I have conversed, while travelling through several slave districts, frequently acknowledged that they “*have inherited a curse from their ancestors, and that it would be better for the country if the slaves were all out of it.*” And with respect to the *red arm of vengeance exposed and bare*, it must often menace those neighborhoods, whence the citizens frequently write to their friends in the *north*, that “it is high time to leave a country where one cannot go to bed in the evening, without the apprehension of being massacred before morning!” I have been assured by citizens having personal knowledge of the fact, that the rage of the slaves is such, in some districts, and especially near Savannah, that their masters and overseers are obliged to retreat to some secure place during the night, or employ armed sentinels. Four slaves were executed but a few months since, in Maryland, for destroying the life of their master's brother, while he was in the act of inflicting corporal punishment upon them. A citizen of Philadelphia, very lately related to me the most shocking heart-rending instance of ferocious vengeance that can be possibly conceived. It very forcibly exemplifies the infatuation and temerity of subjecting those, to whom our persons must necessarily be frequently accessible, to a state of the most savage moral debasement, and then of tampering with their furious untamed passions. A female slave having

been flogged by her mistress, watched for an opportunity to indulge her resentment, which she executed in a manner too horrible to describe, and which it is not deemed prudent to specify.

Many instances have existed, where slaves, in a state of enraged desperation, have involved their masters and themselves, of course, in mutual destruction. A gentleman of high respectability, lately informed me, that he personally knew a master of slaves, who retreated every night into an upper room, the entrance into which was by a trap-door, and kept an axe by his side for defence.

Does not self-preservation, as well as the obligations of religious duty and brotherly love, enjoin the education and civilization of our sable heathen neighbors in our own dwellings, equally as imperatively as of our tawny ones in the wilderness, and of both, on this side of the Atlantic, as well as on the other?\*

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\* The aboriginal Americans have offered their civilized brethren a most beautiful and instructive lesson on this subject. The author of "The Star in the West," Elias Boudinot, L. L. D. relates the following fact. From page 232:—

"The writer of these sheets, many years ago, was one of the corresponding members of a society in Scotland for promoting the gospel among the Indians. To further the great work, they educated two young men, of very serious and religious dispositions, and who were desirous of undertaking the mission for this purpose. When they were ordained and ready to depart, we wrote a letter in the Indian style, to the Delaware nation, then residing on the northwest of the Ohio, informing that we had, by the goodness of the Great Spirit, been favored with a knowledge of his will, as to the worship he required of his creatures, and the means he would bless to promote the happiness of men, both in this life and that which is to come. That thus enjoying so much happiness ourselves, we could not but think of our red brethren in the wilderness, and wish to communicate the glad tidings to them, that they might be partakers with us. We had therefore sent them two ministers of the gospel, who would teach them these great things, and earnestly recommended them to their careful attention. With proper passports the missionaries set off, and arrived in safety at one of their principal towns.

While at a public house, in Fredericktown, there came into the bar-room (on Sunday) a decently dressed white man, of quite a light complexion, in company with one who was totally black. After they went away, the landlord observed that the white man was a slave. I asked him, with some surprise, how that could be possible? To which he replied, that he was a descendant, by female ancestry, of an African slave. He also stated, that not far from Fredericktown, there was a slave estate, on which there were several white females of as fair and elegant appearance as white ladies in general, held in legal bondage as slaves. These facts demonstrate that the peculiar hue, with which it has pleased God to paint the surface of the body of an African, is not the only circumstance which reconciles to the conscience of the European, (white man) the act of depriving him of his liberty and the fruits of his labor. Hence it appears to be a melancholy truth, that man, in a morbid state of intellect, (which I consider to be

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“ The chiefs of the nation were called together, who answered them, that they would take it into consideration, and in the mean time they might instruct their women, but they should not speak to the men. They spent fourteen days in council, and then dismissed them very courteously, with an answer to us. This answer made great acknowledgments for the favor we had done them. They rejoiced exceedingly at our happiness in thus being favored by the Great Spirit, and felt very grateful that we had condescended to remember our red brethren in the wilderness. But they could not help recollecting that we had a people among us, who, because they differed from us in colour, we had made slaves of, and made them suffer great hardships and lead miserable lives. Now, they could not see any reason, if a people being black, entitled us thus to deal with them, why a red colour should not equally justify the same treatment. They therefore had determined to wait, to see whether all the black people amongst us were made thus happy and joyful, before they could put confidence in our promises; for they thought a people who had suffered so much and so long by our means, should be entitled to our first attention; that therefore, they had sent back the two missionaries, with many thanks, promising that when they saw the black people among us restored to freedom and happiness, they would gladly receive our missionaries. This is what in any other case, would be called close reasoning, and is too mortifying a fact to make further observations upon.”

the case with every individual, whose rule of action is not founded upon wisdom and virtue,) voluntarily and almost invariably, confounds right with might, and when stimulated by avarice, frequently hesitates not to *bind and sell* his wife, his children, or his brother! I have received direct information from a gentleman who witnessed the fact, that in one of the slave states, a white man, having married one of his female slaves, after she had borne him several children, sold the whole of them together as he would a drove of cattle; and it is said such instances are frequent. A *gentleman* brought with him from the southward to *Philadelphia*, (the city of brotherly love,) his half brother, the son of his father by a slave, and attempted to sell him! He was happily prevented from executing his sacrilegious design by the interposition of a respectable citizen, who also procured the legal restoration of freedom to the darker *facéd* brother.

In the course of a journey through Virginia, from the city of Washington towards James' river, of about 150 miles, going and returning by different routes, I had frequent opportunities of conversing with the possessors and overseers of slaves, and others, and of observing the general effects of the present system of slavery, upon the morals and prospects of the white population. On combining the facts which presented themselves, I was involuntarily led to this deduction: that the present mode, with occasional exceptions, of managing slaves, and of educating the successors to those who now hold dominion over them, must, eventually and *inevitably*, result, by a progressive ratio, unless reformed, in the poverty, bankruptcy and chagrin of a large portion of the posterity of the existing proprietors of even the most extensive slave estates in the country! This state of things has, to a certain extent, already commenced. I was informed of some ancient and immensely rich slave possessions, and shewn some of the subdivided portions of them, the present numerous heirs of which, are obliged to contract increasing debts annually, in order to maintain the magnificent style of living, and the habits of *amusement* and *sport*, which had been imposed on them by their ances-

tors. In conversation with a gentleman at Charlotteville, I advanced this problem :—Suppose an individual, (who prefers sport and extravagance to prudence and happiness) becomes possessor of 1000 slaves, and 10,000 acres of ground ; if he bequeaths his estate to ten heirs, they will receive each 1000 acres of ground and perhaps 125 slaves.—Pursuing this ratio, each descendant of the third generation will inherit 100 acres of land and about 25 slaves, and the fourth 10 acres, with 2 slaves. If the slaves should multiply proportionably with their masters, the plantations would not ; for it is judged from corresponding information and facts, that many of the proprietors, annually expend the whole amount of their revenue, more or less. The inevitable poverty and physical debility, thus entailed upon the inheritors of slaves, are not half so much to be deplored, as the habits of indolence, dissipation and vice, which, if not the uniform fruits of slavery, are much promoted and encouraged by it.

About eighteen months ago, I saw, in the western part of the state of New-York, a venerable old farmer, whose name is Vaughan. He was in good health (being nearly ninety years of age) and in possession of a delightful farm, which had been rescued from the wilderness and cultivated by himself and his sons. Two years ago, the number of his descendants was about 378! the most of whom have been, or will be, bred to some useful employment, adequate to their subsistence. If he were in possession of 1000 slaves, and 10,000 acres of soil, he could bequeath them only  $26\frac{2}{3}$  acres of land each, and not 3 slaves.

On my return to the city of Washington, I met with a most distressing exemplification of the dangerous policy of educating youth, (let their fortunes be ever so abundant,) in luxury and indolence. I saw a stranger, from one of the slave states, of tolerable genteel appearance, in the prime of life, destitute of property, and unqualified for any occupation whatever. He had inherited and dissipated a considerable estate of land and slaves. His former acquaintance and connexions were of the most reputable

class. He appeared to be literally a prey to despair. He said he should think himself happy if he were capable of laboring in any mechanical employment whatever. He related an anecdote of himself, which exhibits very distinctly, the delirium which affluence and luxurious habits stamp upon the human intellect when not fortified by virtue. He stated, that at a period when he was totally at a loss for resources, he met with an opportunity of engaging in a pursuit, on the commencement of which he received two hundred dollars. Liberality and hospitality to strangers (if their faces are white) are prominent and proverbial characteristics of well bred possessors of slaves, generally.\* So perfectly had his thoughts been attuned and associated to opulence and profusion, that he forgot his inverse position upon the wheel of fortune, and immediately commenced free table and free bottle; and his two hundred dollars disappeared entirely in one month;—soon after which he suffered severe privations for want of cash!

Having sketched an outline of some of the evils, which the present state of slavery necessarily produces to the possessors of slaves, we will next examine its effects upon the slaves themselves, and endeavor to prove that the pecuniary as well as the moral interests and rights of both parties, enjoin the expediency of adopting a different system of management.

It has been urged, in justification of domestic slavery, that the slave receives an equivalent for his incessant toil, in the certainty of being provided with food, clothing, and shelter:—and that a rigorous discipline is indispensable to the preservation of industry, and for security against rebellion and assassination. It is well known, in almost every description of human labor, that constant diligence produces more than a sufficiency of the necessaries of life, for the daily consumption of the laborer. Industry, duly

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\* An inn-keeper, in the south part of Virginia, who hires his stand, complains that his landlord *does him much harm*, by inviting nearly all his respectable company to the festivities of his own dwelling house.



rewarded, and accompanied by temperance and economy, is, with but casual exceptions, to every individual blessed with health, an infallible source of competence and wealth. As our all-wise Creator has fitted our organization, individually, to the acquirement of the means of subsistence, without depending on the labor and generosity of each other, there can be no doubt but he designed that each should retain and enjoy the products of his own hands, without molestation. It is certain that the labor of a slave is of more value than the expense of his daily personal necessities, or he could not be sold, (notwithstanding the risk of premature death,) for 400 or 900 dollars.

The excellence of the great fundamental precept of christianity, "*Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them,*" is acknowledged and admired, it is believed, by every member of the human family, of whatever name or nation, that makes any pretension to religion or moral rectitude. And it most assuredly involves this precept also, which is still easier to obey, and cannot be dispensed with in the positive axioms of natural justice;—*Whatsoever ye would that men should not do unto you, do ye not even so unto them.* Will any possessor of slaves or other individual, voluntarily consign himself to hard labour during life? will he submit to the will and temper of another man, and surrender at his feet, the *whole* of the products of his toil? Unconditional slavery is contrary to the precepts of religion, moral justice, and the abstract, natural and political rights of man. It is a *black, accumulating, threatening-thundercloud*, in our moral horizon, the sudden explosion of which, might produce dangerous and fatal consequences. I am hence constrained to perform the melancholy task of recording my dissent from the sentiments of those, who, from the purest motives, and most laudable philanthropy, request the universal, simultaneous, and *unconditional* emancipation, of a numerous body of meek people, now groaning under the grievous yoke and goading lash of brutal unrewarded servitude, in these United States, "*the world's best hope.*" Yet I do not mean to intimate that equal justice should not, or can-

not be rendered to them. If guided by discretion, it may be administered to them with the highest advantage, and most perfect safety, to both parties. African servitude might, at the outset, be rendered so tolerable and reasonable, that the present appellation of *slavery*, which sounds so discordant, in connexion with the cheering music of *liberty*, might be exchanged for some title, attended with a less chilling and *base* note.—Let *Masters*, without hesitation, become *Patrons, Guardians, Friends, Civil Governors*.—Let *Slaves* be converted into *tenants* and indented *servants*, (or *laborers*) bound, *for the present*, by the lamentable crisis of existing circumstances.—In compliance with the loud and imperative demands of justice and humanity, and the injunctions of policy and self interest, let their toil be carefully and justly proportioned to their bodily strength, and rewarded by a sufficiency of comfortable nourishment, clothing, and shelter. And, particularly in cases of correct behaviour and diligence, let a reasonable sum be paid, monthly or annually, to those who have discretion to make a proper use of it, or allotted and reserved for the education and eventual benefit of their children. Let them be effectually protected from the destructive ravages of distilled spirits. Let them not be bought and sold as beasts of the harness, without their consent; unless guilty of criminal conduct;—and let this be decided by the laws of the country. Nor for all the *silver* in the mines of Potosi, let an ounce of *iron* be rivetted upon their *necks, wrists, or ancles*; for he who fashioned these sections of their bodies, never designed them for such barbarous purposes! Let the “*resounding lash*,”\* and the savage arts of torture and cruelty be laid aside. The adoption of a discipline, founded on justice and reciprocal equity, will render these unnecessary. It is a very important fact, in human nature, that men, in all conditions, perform their duty with far greater alacrity and pleasure, when prompted by the exhilarating anticipation of reward and advantage, than by coercion, and the paralyzing menace of penalties and pain.†

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\* Homer.

† The ingenious and benevolent Mr. J. M'Leod, teacher of a respectable seminary in the city of Washington, has assured the author,

Brissott says, "*Philosophy cries, brethren be just—be beneficent and you will prosper.—Eternal slavery must be an eternal source of crimes;—divest it at least of the epithet eternal, for anguish that knows no bounds can only produce despair.*" "With a pure heart," (says Carnot, another French philanthropist) one is never unhappy." Let the possessor of slaves consult the oracles of his own conscience,—the spontaneous counsels of his own heart, and the sublime parable of the beneficent founder of the christian religion, and act accordingly. Did not the slave, (or his ancestors in Africa,) "*fall among thieves, which stripped him*" of liberty and happiness;—and are purchasers or retainers of known stolen property, (—or liberty—) entirely absolved, either by the laws of God or man, from a degree of participation in the original transgression? Let every individual, then, who finds a slave in his hands, whether by traffic or inheritance, "*take compassion on him,*" like the good Samaritan, and *bind up the old and painful wounds,* which have been inflicted on his "*unalienable rights,*" given him, by his Creator and sole Proprietor;

*Which no man, for gold, can buy or sell!*

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that he has extended the science of encouraging promptitude in duty, to such a degree, that, (by his permission,) his pupils have often flocked to his lodgings, in crowds, before the dawn of day, emulating each other, who should first rouse him from his bed, in order to proceed upon their studies. At the same time, he did not permit his rules to be violated with impunity. He pursued the same policy with soldiers, while an officer, formerly a short time in the United States' army, and with the same success. While a private teacher in a family in which slaves were kept, his sympathy was so deeply wounded by the severity of their punishments for misconduct, that he frequently gave them a quarter of a dollar out of his own pocket, as an inducement for doing their duty so as not to incur the displeasure of their masters. Might not such a system of *genuine and generous republican government* as this, be adopted with mutual benefit to both the *people and their rulers,* on the slave plantations, universally.

This philanthropic and sympathetic countryman of Sterne and of Goldsmith, assured the writer, that he had often declared it, and would, gladly and willingly divide *his* liberty, with those who are now deprived of it, by devoting for its purchase, a share of his daily earnings.

Intellectual and moral improvement is the safe and permanent basis, on which the arch of eventual freedom to the enslaved Africans, may be gradually erected. Let the glorious work be commenced by instructing such of the holders and overseers of slaves and their sons and daughters, as have hitherto been deprived of the blessings of education. Let every slave, less than thirty years of age, of either sex, be taught the art of reading, sufficiently for receiving moral and religious instruction, from books in the English language. For this purpose, the Lancasterian mode of instruction, would be admirably well adapted. A well selected economical library of such books as are calculated to inculcate the love of knowledge and virtue, ought to form an essential appurtenance to every plantation.

Governor Miller, in his message of 1815, to the legislature of North Carolina, affirms, that "*With knowledge and virtue, the united efforts of ignorance and tyranny may be defied.*" Governor Nicholas, in his message of the same year, to the legislature of Virginia, says, "*Without intelligence, self government, our dearest privilege, cannot be exercised.*" President Madison, in his message to the Congress, also of the same year, says, "Without knowledge, the blessings of liberty cannot be fully enjoyed or long preserved." And in his recent valedictory message, that he shall read in the character of the American people, in their true devotion to liberty, and to the constitution, which is its palladium, sure presages that the destined career of his country will exhibit a government pursuing the public good as its sole object, &c. "which maintains inviolably the maxims of public faith, security of persons and property, and encourages in every authorized mode, that general diffusion of knowledge, which guarantees to public liberty its permanency, and to those who possess the blessing, the true enjoyment of it; &c." Thomas Jefferson, in his inaugural speech, says, "If man is not fit to govern himself, how can it be expected that he should be fit to be entrusted with the government of others? Can we expect to find angels in the form of kings?" Whether it be safe to risk the untutored slave with his liberty or not, his situation must be incon-

ceivably horrible, under the cruel lash and uncontrolled power of a master, who is destitute of education or virtue; whose prompter is avarice, and whose religion is intemperance, and the gratification of the most ferocious passions.—It is apprehended that many thousands, *if not hundreds of thousands*, are thus situated! And it is of but little avail, if the master himself be enlightened and humane, as long as he consigns his people to the hands of a cruel stony-hearted overseer. Let legislators then, both national and sectional, perform their duty to their country, and its posterity;—and to mankind, by listening to the wise counsels of many conspicuous living sages, and pursue without hesitation the inestimable “*parting advice*” of George Washington, Benjamin Rush, Samuel Adams, and other departed friends and patrons of man, “*to promote, as objects of PRIMARY importance, institutions for the GENERAL diffusion of knowledge.*”—and establish PUBLIC SCHOOLS in every part of the republic.—And, as all men are vitally interested in the universal dissemination of knowledge and virtue, let all classes combine their influence and means, in aiding the cause of human happiness.

I can well predict the alarm that many will sound, at the project of introducing letters among slaves. Some will *imagine* that knowledge would be a dangerous instrument in their hands. It is true knowledge disarms oppression. But those who have experienced and appreciated its almost uniform tendency, will perceive that it is a pacific weapon,—an olive branch,—accompanied by moderation, justice, and moral duty. Education has been calumniated with the charge of instigating the rebellion and shocking outrages of the slaves in St. Domingo. But the fact is precisely the reverse. The catastrophe was produced chiefly by the haughtiness and imprudence of the white planters, in opposing decrees of the French government, which concerned only the rights of freemen. In this civil war, in which the *white planters* were arrayed against the laws of the national assembly, and the *planters of colour* in defence of them, it is not surprising that the *slaves* should take sides with their *nearest relations*.

The consequent atrocities, most unquestionably resulted from the remembrance of the former barbarity\* of masters, in

“————— the dark uncultur'd soul,  
By education unrefin'd  
(Where hissing malice, vices foul,  
And all the hateful passions growl,  
The frightful wilderness of mind !”

SELLECK OSBORNE.

As mental improvement advances, vengeance and crimes recede. That desirable happy era, when the spirit of peace and benevolence shall pervade all the nations which inhabit the earth,—when both national and personal *slavery* shall be annihilated ;—when nations and individuals shall cease to hunt and destroy each other's lives and property ;—when the science and implements of human preservation and felicity, shall be substituted for those of slaughter and woe ; will commence, precisely at the moment when the rays of *useful knowledge and wisdom*, shall have been extended to the *whole* human family. By useful knowledge, I mean, not only an acquaintance with valuable arts and sciences, but also an understanding of our various moral and religious duties, in relation to our creator, to our neighbor, and to ourselves. By wisdom, I mean that kind of sagacity, which influences us to regulate our passions and conduct, in conformity to the precepts of knowledge, reason and religion. Until an approach towards such a state of things, is effected, the

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\* “ Give me an uninformed brute, said Mirabeau, and I will soon make him a ferocious monster. It was a white, who first plunged a negro into a burning oven,—who dashed out the brains of a child in the presence of its father,—who fed a slave with his own proper flesh. These are the monsters that have to account for the barbarity of the revolted savages. Millions of Africans have perished on this soil of blood. In this dreadful struggle the crimes of the whites are yet the most horrible :—They are the offspring of despotism ; whilst those of the blacks originate in the hatred of slavery—the thirst of vengeance.”

[Speech of M. Brissot, in the French National Assembly, 1st December, 1791.]

names of *liberty* and *security* on this earth, will differ but little from a *will with a wisp*, either to monarchs or their vassals. At present, violence bears universal and imperial sway ;—and ignorance is the magic spell which sustains its sceptre. This dark veil, which enshrouds nearly the whole human race, can be penetrated and removed, with much greater certainty and facility, by the mild but invincible rays of intellectual light, than by opposing violence with violence, and evil to evil. The countryman in Æsop's Fables, was induced to throw off his cloak, by the gentle but melting rays of the *physical* sun, after the wind had exerted its fury in vain. What a boundless empire of glory and *unalloyed* bliss, might the monarchs and rulers of the age, and all possessors of power or wealth, attain, by causing their numerous subjects, or brethren, perpetually encompassed by the snares of ignorance, vice and oppression, to be instructed ; and elevating poor degraded, afflicted human nature, to that scale of dignity in the creation, which was evidently assigned to it, by the Supreme Parent of the universe !

Slaves, enveloped in the fogs of brutal ignorance and debasement, and exasperated by constant severity and frequent cruelty, cannot fail of being much more dangerous neighbors, and much less useful servants, than they would be, if tamed by moral instruction\* and kind treat-

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\* While engaged in transcribing these reflections, a newspaper accidentally comes before me, which contains the following advertisement :—

“ EXAMINATION IN AUGUSTINE HALL.

“ There will be an examination of the coloured students in Augustine Hall, on Monday, 23d inst. (Dec.) in the African Methodist Episcopal Bethel Church, to begin at 6 o'clock. After the exercises in the Latin language, geography, &c. they will deliver orations, dialogues, &c. and specimens of their improvement, by which it will appear that the sons of the despised and hitherto oppressed African race, are as capable of improvement as others, and that their upper works are as good, to say no more, as the youth of any other nation. Friends to the cause, and all who wish their curio-

ment. Docility is well known to be one of the peculiar characteristics of the African race; and whenever opportunities have occurred, they have indicated a capacity of receiving instruction, and of becoming qualified for a humane and moral government.

Should these remarks ever reach the understanding of the slave whose yoke is rivetted upon him, by the laws of the government under which he lives, if he will believe the writer, to be his unfeigned compassionate friend, let him accept his sincere advice, to submit with fortitude to his fate, and wait with patience the arrival of the day of joy, which has already commenced its journey, and will assuredly overtake him or his posterity, not long hence. Let him remember, that it is only the gradual progress of reason, and the principles of humanity, that can relieve him; and that the more he resists the noose of slavery, the closer it girds itself about his neck, *even to suffocation or strangling*. Let him conciliate the good will and friendship of his master, by reasonable diligence, and inflexible fidelity.

Governor Miller, in his message, which has been already mentioned, says, "But now, thank God, the human mind having progressed with gradual march in the path of science and political philosophy, &c. the principles, *that all men are by nature equally free and independent,*" &c. have gained and are daily gaining more extensive currency." This declaration, which probably alludes to Europe, is conspicuously true, with respect to our own country. In several or all of the slave states, there are many benevolent respectable individuals, who are dissatisfied with the practice of retaining their *innocent African brethren* in bondage, and have signified their de-

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sity to be gratified, are respectfully invited to attend." *Tuesday morning*—I attended the examination alluded to above, last evening, and was much gratified to find that the performances of the young Africans, were such as to justify the statements of the advertisement. An experienced teacher has affirmed, that their progress has exceeded that of any boys within his knowledge in an equal time.



sire to release them.\* And although these votaries to humanity, are prevented by the existing laws of their respective districts, from accomplishing the full extent of

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\* Several letters have been addressed to the Pennsylvania Society for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, by individuals residing in the southern and south-western states, expressing their desire to emancipate their slaves, and requesting the Society to receive them under its patronage.

In a letter from Dr. John Adams, to the Society, dated Richmond Hill, Dec. 19, 1815, he states that, *A certain Samuel Guest, deceased, had, by his will, directed that his slaves, amounting to about 300, should be emancipated, and his lands sold for their benefit; which, being prohibited by law, unless they should be removed out of the boundaries of the commonwealth of Virginia, he requests the aid of the society, and recommends their transportation to Guinea.*

The committee of the American Convention for Promoting the Abolition of Slavery, to whom this letter was referred, reported, *that it did not appear that the convention could, at present, propose any specific plan for accomplishing the benevolent intention of Samuel Guest.* This is really a distressing case. If there exists any where, the power of affording a remedy in such instances as this, the omission of exercising it is, in effect, an act of converting freemen into slaves! This subject demands the serious attention of the government, and of every citizen, who, like Howard, the model of beneficence, is "*a patriot of every clime.*"

Since the original of the preceding note was written, the following statement has been published in the National Intelligencer:—

"The legislature of Indiana are now actively engaged in the organization of the details of the state government. Much debate has taken place on a petition or letter from W. E. Sumner, of Williamson county, (Tennessee,) requesting that the legislature may enable him to bring into the state a number of slaves, with the view which he expresses in the following words:

"I have about 40, and my intention is, if permitted by the laws of Indiana, to bring and free them, to purchase land for them and settle them on it; to give them provisions for the first year, and furnish them with tools for agriculture and domestic manufactory, and next spring with domestic animals. You must be aware, sir, that this must be attended with no small expenditure of money and trouble. I think, that after a man has had the use of slaves and their ancestors, twenty or thirty years, it is unjust and inhuman to set them free, unprovided with a home, &c. &c. All that I have were raised by my father and myself, and the oldest is about my age (46.)

their wishes, it is hoped they will not fail to recognize the high privilege, which still remains in their hands, of exercising reciprocal justice to their sable *prisoners*, (no longer slaves,) and of educating and qualifying them for their eventual freedom and reception into an asylum, which, it may be confidently anticipated, will, ere long, be prepared for them. In fact, I do not hesitate to predict, that whenever slaves shall become qualified by intelligence and moral cultivation, for the rational enjoyment of liberty, and the performance of the various relative social virtues and duties of life, the enlightened American legislators and depositories of the rights of man, will listen to the voice of reason and justice, and the spirit of our social organization, and *permit* the release of

“ ——— the poor fetter'd slave on bended knee,  
From” Columbia's “ sons imploring to be free;”\*

without banishing him, as a traitor, from his native land, where his services, as an industrious, though free laborer, may be indispensable to its cultivation. But under present circumstances, I am not disposed to question the policy or propriety of suitable laws, for regulating the manumission of slaves, with a view to their own welfare and subsistence as well as the preservation of the public peace. Many benevolent gentlemen have exercised a sort of morbid or mistaken humanity, in manumitting, or *turning out of doors*, slaves who had devoted the greater part of the

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I am also very desirous to leave the slave states, and spend my few remaining days in that state where involuntary slavery is not admissible; and will, with the blessing of God, prepare to do so as soon as I can settle my affairs.”

“ The mode in which this letter should be treated is the subject of the debate. It appears to be agreed that the constitution of the state forbids a compliance with his request.”

The writer has been assured, that this conscientious, just, and generous individual, is one among the number of those who made similar propositions to the above, to the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, and with the like disappointment.

\* Darwin's Botanic Garden.

common period of man's life to their service, and who, being morally and physically disqualified for securing an *honest* maintenance, have finished their days in misery and woe. A very benevolent possessor of slaves, in the district of Columbia, informed the writer, that he was *principled* against retaining them any longer than while the value of their service amounts to the cost of purchase; and that he had dismissed several, who immediately commenced a career of wretchedness and final destruction. The sentiments, on this subject, of "*The American Convention, for promoting the Abolition of slavery, and improving the condition of the African race,*" are highly deserving of consideration. In their circular, addressed to the general Abolition Societies in the United States, they make this declaration: "We are persuaded that the only means of accomplishing the final and complete emancipation of this unfortunate people throughout our country, is, the extension to them of the benefits of moral and intellectual cultivation. That their redemption from the thralldom in which they now are, should be preceded or accompanied by such aids, as will qualify them to discharge their relative, social, and religious duties."

It would, perhaps, be a problem worthy of the consideration of the legislators of those states in which slavery is tolerated, whether their laws for regulating manumissions, might not, with propriety, be so modified, as to authorise judges, justices, or other magistrates, to grant *permits* for the emancipation of such slaves, as shall be satisfactorily proved to be morally and physically qualified for liberty. Such a regulation would be peculiarly important to those humane masters, who are merciful and just to their slaves, until their own guardianship is annulled by death; and are unwilling to risk them in the hands of their legitimate heirs, or to strangers who may purchase them at public auction.

I have said, in the beginning of this essay, that separate colonization, &c. is impracticable, except partially. I then gave one reason for this opinion, and will now offer another. Were the whole of *our numerous slave popula-*

tion, already manumitted, and transferred totally to a distinct colonial establishment, in this country or in Africa: our numerous white population, in several of the more southerly states, would need to be provided with another colonial establishment, in some latitude more favourable to their *physical* powers, or else perish amidst the desolate cotton and rice fields.

My conviction, that the existence of Europeans, (or white men) under the blaze of a torrid sun, is dependent on African industry, (or on the labour of such inhabitants of the earth, as are adapted by nature to the equatorial regions,) must not be mistaken for an assent to the perpetual duration of involuntary servitude and unconditional vassalage. This is a circumstance, resulting from the wisdom of Providence, which ought to fill the hearts of the proprietors of rice and cotton plantations, with gratitude and kindness towards their *black benefactors*. Let the magnificent work of progressive and ultimate emancipation, concomitant with mental improvement, be kept steadily in view;—but let not the total depopulation of an immense tract of valuable *improved* country, be held forth as essential to its accomplishment.

But as there is, probably at this moment, in many parts of the United States, and will continue to be, an increasing excess of free black and mulatto population, and also of slaves, who might be released if they could be disposed of; humanity as well as policy, strongly recommends the institution of some asylum, to which this description of *strangers in a foreign land*, may resort if they please, and enjoy the blessings of knowledge, *social happiness*, and the products of their own industry; and perhaps be protected, at the same time, from the sacrilegious talons of the numerous hordes of men-stealers, with which our reputed free soil has long been infested and polluted. And as the congress of the United States have hitherto declined patronising this object, (to which their attention has been frequently invited,) its accomplishment will devolve, probably, on beneficent societies, and individuals. The most eligible and practicable plan, perhaps, that could be de-

vised for this purpose, would be to open subscriptions throughout the United States, for raising a fund, to be applied to the purchase of an extensive tract or territory of United States' land, in some proper district, (which probably might be obtained on a liberal credit,) where such coloured people, as now are, or may become free, might be invited to settle as tenants, or eventual purchasers. The settlement might be committed to the care of proper agents, and if the profits should ultimately exceed a sufficient amount to remunerate the original advances with the interest, the surplus might be appropriated to the education and general benefit of the African race in this country.\*

Having now (as I hope,) shewn the practicability and mutual advantages, of the melioration and ultimate freedom of the American slave population, I shall proceed to communicate some facts and remarks on the interior traffic in slaves, and on the practice of kidnapping coloured persons, legally free.

To those who may object to the propriety of exposing to public view, such deeds as are likely to shock the feelings and sympathy of the friends of humanity, I reply, that the object is not to excite popular execration against their authors, but commiseration towards the sufferers,

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\* A few days subsequent to the time that the above suggestions were originally committed to paper, the House of Delegates of the Virginia Legislature, passed the following resolution, by an almost unanimous vote; "That the Executive be requested to correspond with the President of the United States, for the purpose of obtaining a Territory upon the North Pacific, or at some other place, not within any of the states, or the territorial governments of the United States, to serve as an asylum for such persons of colour, as are now free, and may desire the same, and for those who may be hereafter emancipated within this commonwealth, &c." If the present system of restrictions upon emancipation should be persevered in, for an indefinite length of time, the necessary final result, must be frightful to contemplate. If a state, containing soil sufficient to subsist only 1,000,000 of slaves, besides the free population, provides no outlet, for the excess of that number, by permitting their emancipation or otherwise; *starvation* must be the consequence!

and to discourage the repetition of cruelty. In supplications for redress of grievances, it is customary and necessary too, for the aggrieved party, to represent the wrongs complained of. The facts adduced, can be well substantiated:—but as it is believed that no valuable purpose will be gained, by the mention of names and specific places where they occurred, they will be omitted as far as it may be convenient.

In the structure of our political institutions, we have, in some respects, undoubtedly excelled the ancient republics:—And in others, we have evidently degenerated. Solon perceived that slavery was a fruitful source of moral depravity to the Athenians, and abolished it; notwithstanding it had its origin in the previous voluntary contraction of debts, by the slaves. We neglect this valuable lesson of Solon, and also a political maxim of his, which ought to form the corner-stone of every republic. Being asked what kind of government is best, he answered, “that in which an injury to the meanest member of the community, is esteemed an aggression upon the whole.” Our laws for the protection of the rights and liberty of free yellow and black people, must be exceedingly defective, or there could not at this moment be thousands of them illegally held in slavery.

Slavery, says Sterne, however disguised, *is still a bitter draught*; but it is rendered tenfold more bitter and intolerable, when the members of families are dragged asunder, never to behold each other, or their native *wonted* country again.—And it is the *uncontrolled slave trade*, between the middle and southerly states, which gives facility to the extensive and increasing practice of kidnaping, (slaves as well as freemen,) and secures it from the possibility of detection, except casually. Under the existing laws, if a free coloured man travels without passports certifying his right to his liberty, he is generally apprehended; and frequently plunged into slavery, by the operation of the laws. But after being seized and manacled by the kidnapper, the slave merchant drives him through several states, without interruption, and sells

him where he seldom regains his liberty. If the wisdom of the state or general governments should not recommend the complete abolition of the internal as well as external slave trade, it is believed, at least, that an acquaintance with its abuses, will convince them of the necessity of so regulating it, as to confine the traffic *totally* to legal *slaves*. This could, perhaps, be effectually accomplished, by compelling every travelling slave-trader, to report his slaves to a proper magistrate, in every township or county through which he passes, and to produce certificates, from some magistrate residing near the place in which they were purchased, of their being legal slaves and legally sold;—and also by compelling every purchaser of imported slaves, (by land or sea,) to register them, and file similar certificates, in the offices of the respective county clerks.

The act of depriving a free man of his liberty, being a violation of the constitution of the United States, and an *overt attack* upon the public liberty, ought to be declared treason of some sort or other, (perhaps *low treason*,) and punished by a reciprocity, in some degree, of the fate, to which the conspirator attempts to involve his victim;—imprisonment in a penitentiary, or some other secure place of industry, and moral education;—for, I do not believe, there ever lived a kidnapper, who had read the whole of the New Testament, or any part of Seneca's *Morals*, or Paley's *Principles of Moral Philosophy*, or any similar books.

On the 4th day of December, 1815, (the day on which the session of congress commenced,) being at the seat of government of the United States, I was preparing to enjoy the first opportunity that had occurred to me, of beholding the assembled representatives of the American republic. As I was about to proceed to the building where the session was opened, my agreeable reverie was suddenly interrupted by the voice of a stammering boy, who, as he was coming into the house, from the street,

exclaimed, "There goes the Ge-Ge-orgy-men\* with a drove o' niggers chain'd together two and two." What's that, said I,—I must see,—and, going to the door, I just had a distant *glimpse* of a light covered waggon, followed by a procession of men, women and children, resembling that of a funeral. I followed them hastily; and as I approached so near as to discover that they were bound together in pairs, some with ropes, and some with *iron chains*, (which I had hitherto seen used only for restraining beasts,) the involuntary successive heavings of my bosom became irrepressible. This was, with me, an affection perfectly peculiar to itself, which never having before experienced, gave me some surprise. I have since heard an intelligent gentleman, from Scotland, describe a similar symptom. He affirmed, that on his arrival upon the coast of the United States, (in Chesapeake Bay,) his first view of the slaves *brought his heart into his throat*. I have also been told by a gentleman, who holds a seat in the senate of the United States, that "*a drove of manacled slaves, was to him, an insupportable spectacle, which he generally endeavored to avoid*;"—and by a representative, (since deceased,) from one of the slave states, who was himself a possessor of slaves, "*that he never could bear to see slaves manacled and fettered with bolts and chains, nor families torn asunder and sold to the slave-traders, and wondered how any one could be so inhuman as to do such acts*." Overtaking the *caravan*, just opposite to the old capitol (then in a state of ruins from the conflagration by the British army,)† I inquired

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\* On first hearing this epithet used, I was at a loss to account for its meaning. I have since observed that, in the middle states, the general title applied to slave-traders, indiscriminately, is "*Georgiamen*."

† Would it be superstitious to presume, that the Sovereign Father of all nations, permitted the *perpetration* of this apparently execrable transaction, as a *fiery*, though salutary signal of his displeasure at the conduct of his Columbian children, in erecting and idolizing this splendid fabric as the temple of freedom, and at the same time oppressing with the yoke of captivity and toilsome bondage, twelve or fifteen hundred thousand of their African brethren (by logical in-