

# VARIOUS

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Literature, Art, and Politics:*

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**CHRISTOPHER NORTH**

Plutarch, when about to enter upon the crowded lives of Alexander and Caesar, declares his purpose and sets forth the true nature and province of biography in these words:—"It must be borne in mind that my design is not to write histories, but lives. And the most glorious exploits do not always furnish us with the clearest discoveries of virtue or vice in men. Sometimes a matter of less moment, an expression or a jest, informs us better of their characters and inclinations than the most famous sieges, the greatest armaments, or the bloodiest battles whatsoever. Therefore, as portrait-painters are more exact in the lines and features of the face, in which character is seen, than in the other parts of the body, so I must be allowed to give my more particular attention to the marks and indications of the souls of men, and

while I endeavor by these to portray their lives, may be free to leave more weighty matters and great battles to be treated of by others."

That these general principles of biography are correct, and that Plutarch, by adhering to them, succeeded, beyond all others, in making his heroes realities, men of flesh and blood, whom we see and know like those about us, in whom we feel the warmest interest, and from whom we derive lessons of deep wisdom, as from our own experience,—all this could best be shown by the enduring popularity of his "Lives," and the seal of approval set upon them by critics of the most opposite schools. What a long array of names might be presented of those who have given their testimony to the wondrous fascination of this undying Greek!—names of the great and wise through many long centuries, men differing in age, country, religion, language, and occupation. For ages he has charmed youth, instructed manhood, and solaced graybeards. His heroes have become household words throughout the world. He has been equally familiar with court, with camp, and with cottage. He has been the companion of the soldier, the text-book of the philosopher, and the *vade-mecum* of kings and statesmen. And his name even now, after the lapse of so many generations, is fresher than ever.

Yet Lord Macaulay could not refrain from a sneer at Plutarch as a pedant who thought himself a great philosopher and a great politician. Pedant he may have been; philosopher and politician he may not have been; but he was, nevertheless, the

prince of biographers. Macaulay has praised Boswell's "Life of Johnson" as the best biography ever written. But was not Boswell a pedant? Was he a philosopher? Macaulay himself has penned many biographies. Most of them are quite above the pedantry of small facts. Instead, they are crammed with deep philosophy, with abstractions, and with the balancing of antithetical qualities. They are bloodless frameworks, without life or humanity,—bundles of peculiarities skilfully grouped, and ticketed with such and such a name. No one sees a man within. As biographies they will not be remembered, but as instances of labored learning, of careful special pleading, and of brilliant rhetoric. Elsewhere, however, he has descended from philosophy, and not been above the pedantry of detail. And he has given us, in consequence, charming lives,—successful, in fact, just so far as he has followed in the footsteps of the old Greek. Yet who would for a moment compare his Pitt, his Goldsmith, or his William IV., as biography, with Plutarch's Alcibiades, or Cato the Censor? We remember the fact that Goldsmith sometimes wore a peach-blossom suit, but we see Cato in his toga.

Very many works have been written, purporting to be "The Life and Times" of this or that man. Where a man has occupied a large historic place, has been moulded by his times, and has moulded in turn the coming years, such works are well enough as history. As biography they are failures. The Times get the upper hand, and thrust down the Life. Without the Life, such

works would be better, too, as history; for man and the world are two different things, and their respective provinces cannot, without confusion, be thrown into one. Now every leading man bears a twofold character. He is man, and something more: he is a power in history. Whatever concerns him as man,—his humanity, his individuality, his personal qualities, his character and inclinations, "the marks and indications of the soul," as Plutarch phrases it,—all this, and hardly more than this, is matter for biography, and for that alone. But so far as he is a representative man, standing for communities, for nations, for the world of his time,—so far as he is an historic force, making and solving, in some degree, large human problems,—so far as he is the organ chosen by destiny to aid in the development of his race,—just so far he is a maker of history, and therefore its proper subject, and its alone. Napoleon was not only a man, but he was Europe for some twenty years. Louis XIV was the Europe of half a century. There should be lives of such men, for they were akin to their fellows: histories, too, should be theirs, for they were allied to Nature, and fate, and law. They jested; and Biography, smiling, seized her tablets. They embodied a people; and Clio, pondering, opened the long scrolls of time.

All biography has been said to be eulogistic in its nature. This is well enough. But it is not well, when the author, high on daring stilts, overlooks the little matters just about him, and, rapidly running his eye over the wastes that stretch from Dan to Beersheba, prates of the fields that lie along the distant horizon.

Nor is it well, when he forgets his hero, and writes himself,—when he constantly thrusts upon us philosophy, abstractions, and the like,—when he has a pet theory to sustain through thick and thin,—when narrative becomes disquisition, memoir is criticism, life is bloodless, and the man is a puppet whose strings he jerks freakishly. There may be something good in all this; but it is all quite out of place: it is simply not biography. The foundation of most biographical sins is, perhaps, ambition,—an ambition to do something more or something other than the subject demands, and to pitch the strain in too high a key. Hence we have usually found the memoirs of comparatively insignificant men to be better reading, and more fertile in suggestion, than those of what are called great men. Not that the real life, as he lived it, of a man of mediocrity has in itself more seeds of thought than that of a hero. Far otherwise. But his written life has often greater lessons of wisdom for us, precisely because it is generally found to give us more of the individual, and more of our common humanity,—which is the very thing we want. There is less of pretext to pour this one small drop into the broad ocean, and then treat us to a vague essay on salt-water. What is it, for instance, that gives to Southey's "Life of Nelson" its great excellence? There have been many other works on the same subject, larger, fuller, and more carefully studied. But these will perish, while that will be cherished by all the generations to come. It is because the author kept throughout precisely on a level with his subject. He was conscious, on every page, that he was writing of one man,

—that nothing was trivial which could throw light on this man, and nothing important which did not tend directly to the same end. Nelson was made to speak, not only in his own words, but in the many little ways and actions which best show the stuff one is made of. There is no essay, nothing strictly didactic. Facts are given: inferences are left entirely with the reader. Few books are more wearisome than those which are thoroughly exhaustive, which point a moral and adorn a tale on every page. Imagination and thought must sit supine, despairing of new conquests. Their work has all been done before.

Christopher North—Heaven be praised!—was not an "historic force." He was a good many things, but not that. And so it was always pleasant to read him and about him. He was so completely vital and individual, that nothing that concerned him ever lacked in human interest. The world has known him for a long time, and has lost nothing by the acquaintance. Latterly it has come to know him better than before in his character of citizen, son, husband, and father; and it has come to the sage conclusion that even as a family-man he was not quite so bad, after all. It is a great relief to know at last that Christopher was throughout consistent,—that the child was father to the man. One of his first exploits was fishing with a bent pin. Another was to preach a little sermon on a naughty fish. The "application," though brief, was earnest. To the infant expounder, the subject of his discourse doubtless appeared in the guise of a piscatorial Cockney. After many other the like foreshadowings, and after

draining dry his native village, he went, when twelve years of age, to Glasgow University. Professor Jardine, who then held the chair of Logic, was fully alive to the rare promise of his pupil, and said of him subsequently,—“He lived in my family during the whole course of his studies at Glasgow, and the general superintendence of his education was committed to me; and it is but justice to him to declare, that during my long experience I never had a pupil who discovered more genius, more ardor, or more active and persevering diligence.” But his ardor was not limited to philosophy and the humanities; his powers required a larger field than the curriculum. He walked, ran, wrestled, boxed, boated, fished, wrote poetry, played the flute, danced, kept a careful diary, and read largely. Even at this early age, he felt the merit of the then unappreciated Wordsworth, and, on the appearance of the “Lyrical Ballads,” wrote the author a letter expressive of his admiration.

In 1803, Wilson, now eighteen, was transferred to Oxford as a Gentleman Commoner of Magdalen. And surely never lighted on the Oxford orb so glorious a vision, or such a bewildering phenomenon. He was, indeed,

*“Rara avis in terris, nigroque simillima cygno.”*

There, as elsewhere, his life was an extraordinary one. His immense vitality forced him to seek expression in every possible direction. The outlets which sufficed for ordinary souls were insignificant conduits for the great floods pent up within his breast; and he surged forth mightily at every point, carrying all

before him. His tastes and sympathies were all-embracing. His creed and his practice were alike catholic. All was fish that came to his net. He sat at the feet of muscular Gamaliels, and campaigned with veterans of the classics. He hobnobbed with prize-fighters, and was the choice spirit in the ethereal feasts of poets. He was king of the ring, and *facile princeps* in the Greek chorus. He could "talk horse" with any jockey in the land; yet who like him could utter tender poetry and deep philosophy? He had no rival in following the hounds, or scouring the country in breakneck races; and none so careered over every field of learning. He angled in brooks and books, and landed many a stout prize. He would pick up here and there a "fly in amber," and add it to his stores. He was the easy victor in every foot-race, and took the Newdigate prize for poetry, in 1806. He burned the midnight oil, and looked through ruddy wine at the small hours chasing each other over the dial. For hours, almost whole days, he would sit silent at the helm of his boat on the Isis, his rapt eye peopling the vacant air with unutterable visions. He swam like a dolphin, rode like a Centaur, and De Quincey called him the best unprofessional male dancer he had ever seen. Three times he was vanquished by a huge shoemaker,—so the story goes,—champion of the "Town": at the fourth meeting, the Gentleman Commoner proved himself the better man, knocked his antagonist out of time, and gave him twenty pounds. Another professor of the manly art of self-defence, who had ventured to confront the young Titan, and was unexpectedly laid low, said

in astonishment,—"You can be only one of the two: you are either Jack Wilson or the Devil." He proved himself to be the former, by not proclaiming, "*Voe victis!*" and by taking his prize of war to the nearest alehouse, and then and there filling him with porter. Sotheyby said it was worth a journey from London to hear him translate a Greek chorus; and, at a later day, the brawny Cumberland men called him "a varra bad un to lick."

Never were such "constitutionals" known, even at old Oxford. He would wander away alone, sometimes for many days, tramping over the country leagues and leagues away, making the earth tremble with his heavy tread, and distancing everything with his long, untiring stride. Then, on his return, he would be the prince of good-fellows once more, and fascinate the merry revellers with the witchery of his tongue. Even when a boy, he had won a bet by walking six miles in two minutes less than an hour. He once dined in Grosvenor Square, and made his appearance at Oxford at an early hour the next morning, having walked the fifty-eight miles at a tremendous pace. In his vacations, he walked over all the Lake region of England, the North of Scotland, and the greater part of Wales. On finishing his course at Oxford, he went on foot to Edinburgh,—more than three hundred miles. He was equally remarkable as a leaper, surpassing all competitors. He once jumped across the Cherwell—twenty-three feet clear—with a run of only a few yards. This is, we believe, the greatest feat of the kind on record. General Washington, it is known, had great powers in this way; but the

greatest distance ever leaped by him, if we remember right, was but twenty-one feet.

The many vagaries into which he was led, and the innumerable odd pranks he played, would be sufficient, in the case of any one else, to prove that he was not a reading man. But not so with Wilson. One of his contemporaries at Oxford thus described him:—"Wilson read hard, lived hard, but never ran into vulgar or vicious dissipation. He talked well, and loved to talk. Such gushes of poetic eloquence as I have heard from his lips,—I doubt whether Jeremy Taylor himself, could he speak as well as he wrote, could have kept up with him. Every one anticipated his doing well, whatever profession he might adopt, and when he left us, old Oxford seemed as if a shadow had fallen upon its beauty." Wilson himself confessed that he yielded, for a short time, to "unbridled dissipation," seeking solace for the agony he experienced from the conduct of his stern mother, who ruthlessly nipped in the bud his affection for a bonny lass at Dychmont. He might have used the very words of Gibbon, whose father nipped, in a similar way, his attachment for Mademoiselle Susan Curchod, afterward Madame Necker:—"After a painful struggle, I yielded to my fate: I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son; my wound was insensibly healed by time, absence, and the habits of a new life." It is difficult to conceive of Gibbon's wound as a deep one, or of his struggle as painful. But Wilson, whose affections were far stronger, suffered much. He almost made up his mind to run away to Timbuctoo, with Mungo Park;

and his deep gloom showed how the iron had entered his soul. But time and absence and new habits healed his wound, as well as Gibbon's, without a journey to Africa.

We mentioned above that Wilson carried off the Newdigate prize for the best poem, in 1806. His subject was, "Painting, Poetry, and Architecture." He professed, in general, to put a very low estimate on college prize-poems, and rated his own so low that he would not allow it to be published with his subsequent poems. But in the "Noctes Ambrosianae" for October, 1825, he was not above saying a good word in favor of these much-berated effusions, as follows:—

*"North.* It is the fashion to undervalue Oxford and Cambridge prize-poems; but it is a stupid fashion. Many of them are most beautiful. Heber's 'Palestine!' A flight, as upon angel's wing, over the Holy Land! How fine the opening!

[We omit the lines quoted,—the well-known beginning of the poem.]

*"Tickler.* More than one of Wrangham's prize-poems are excellent;

Richard's 'Aboriginal Brutus' is a powerful and picturesque performance;

Chinnery's 'Dying Gladiator' magnificent; and Milman's 'Apollo Belvedere' splendid, beautiful, and majestic.

*"North.* Macaulay and Praed have written very good prize-poems. These two young gentlemen ought to make a figure in the world."

Heber was a contemporary and friend of Wilson at Oxford; as was also Lockhart, among others. The distant See of Calcutta interrupted the intercourse of the former, in after-life, while Maga and party bound the latter still closer to his old college-friend. One of Wilson's college-mates has given an odd anecdote descriptive of his appearance at their social gatherings:—

"I shall never forget his figure, sitting with a long earthen pipe, a great tie-wig on. Those wigs had descended, I fancy, from the days of Addison, (who had been a member of our college,) and were worn by us all, (in order, I presume, to preserve our hair and dress, from tobacco-smoke,) when smoking commenced after supper; and a strange appearance we made in them."

Wilson left Oxford in 1807, after passing a highly creditable examination for his degree. His disappointed affections had so weighed upon him, that he had a nervous apprehension of being plucked,—which, however, turned out to be quite unnecessary. He was now twenty-two years of age, a man singularly favored both by Nature and by fortune,—possessed of almost everything which might seem to insure the fullest measure of health, happiness, success, and fame. Rarely, indeed, do the gods give so freely of their good gifts to a single mortal. His circumstances were easy: a fortune of some fifty thousand pounds having come to him from his father, who had died while his son was a mere boy. After visiting his mother at Edinburgh, and rambling largely here and there, he purchased the beautiful estate of Elleray on Lake Windermere, and there fixed his residence. These were

the halcyon days of that noted region: the "Lakers," as they were called, were then in their glory. A rare coterie, indeed, it was that was gathered together along the banks of Windermere. Though they are now no more, yet is their memory so linked to these scenes that thousands of fond pilgrims still visit these placid waters to throw one glance upon the home of genius, the birthplace of great thoughts. Here Wilson was in his element. His soul feasted itself on the wondrous charms of Nature, and held high converse with the master-minds of literature. There was quite enough to satisfy the cravings even of his multiform spirit. He soon came to know, and to be on terms of greater or less intimacy with, Coleridge, Wordsworth, De Quincey, Southey, the celebrated Bishop Watson, of the See of Llandaff, Charles Lloyd, and others,—then the *genii loci*. It may be remembered that his admiration for Wordsworth was already of long standing, his boyish enthusiasm having led him, when at Glasgow, to send his tribute of praise to the author of the "Lyrical Ballads." Some fifteen to twenty years later,—in one of the numbers of the "Noctes,"—his admiration for the poet had temporarily cooled somewhat. Then was its aphelion, and soon it began to return once more toward its central sun. It must have been transient spleen which dictated such sentences as these:—

"*Tickler*. Wordsworth says that a great poet must be great in all things.

"*North*. Wordsworth often writes like an idiot; and never more so than when he said of Milton, 'His soul was like a star, and

dwelt apart!' For it dwelt in tumult, and mischief, and rebellion. Wordsworth is, in all things, the reverse of Milton,—a good man, and a bad poet.

*"Tickler.* What! that Wordsworth whom Maga cries up as the Prince of Poets?

*"North.* Be it so: I must humor the fancies of some of my friends. But had that man been a great poet, he would have produced a deep and lasting impression on the mind of England; whereas his verses are becoming less and less known every day, and he is, in good truth, already one of the illustrious obscure ...

"And yet, with his creed, what might not a great poet have done? That the language of poetry is but the language of strong human passion! ... And what, pray, has he made out of this true and philosophical creed? A few ballads, (pretty, at the best,) two or three moral fables, some natural description of scenery, and half a dozen narratives of common distress or happiness. Not one single character has he created, not one incident, not one tragical catastrophe. He has thrown no light on man's estate here below; and Crabbe, with all his defects, stands immeasurably above Wordsworth as the Poet of the Poor ... I confess that the 'Excursion' is the worst poem, of any character, in the English language. It contains about two hundred sonorous lines, some of which appear to be fine, even in the sense, as well as the sound. The remaining seven thousand three hundred are quite ineffectual. Then what labor the builder of that lofty rhyme must have undergone! It is, in its own way, a small Tower of Babel,

and all built by a single man."

Christopher was surely in the dumps, when he wrote thus: he was soured by an Edinburgh study. After a run in the crisp air of the moors, he would never have written such atrabilious criticism of a poet whom he admired highly, for it was not honestly in the natural man. Neither his postulates nor his inferences are quite correct. It is incorrect to say that the poet's creed was a true one; that, with it, he might have been a great poet; but that, from not making the most of it, he was a bad one. De Quincey's position, we think, was the only true one: that Wordsworth's poetic creed was radically false,—a creed more honored in the breach than the observance,—a creed good on paper only; that its author, though professing, did in fact never follow it; that, with it, he could never have been a great poet; and that, without it, he was really great.

Wilson at Windermere, like Wilson at Oxford, was versatile, active, Titanic, mysterious, and fascinating. An immense energy and momentum marked the man; and a strange fitfulness, a lack of concentration, made the sum total of results far too small. There was power; but much of it was power wasted. He overflowed everywhere; his magnificent *physique* often got the better of him; his boundless animal spirits fairly ran riot with him; his poetic soul made him the fondest and closest of Nature's wooers; his buoyant health lent an untold luxury to the mere fact of existence; his huge muscles and tuneful nerves always hungered for action, and bulged and thrilled joyously when face to face with danger. He was exuberant, extravagant,

enthusiastic, reckless, stupendous, fantastic. It is only by the cumulation of epithets that one can characterize a being so colossal in proportion, so many-sided in his phases, so manifold in operation. He was a brilliant of the first water, whose endless facets were forever gleaming, now here, now there, with a gorgeous, but irregular light. No man could tell where to look for the coming splendor. The glory dazzled all eyes, yet few saw their way the clearer by such fitful flashes.

Wilson, in some of his phases, reminds us often of a great glorified child, rejoicing in an eternal boyhood. He had the same impulse, restlessness, glee, zest, and *abandon*. All sport was serious work with him, and serious work was sport. No frolic ever came amiss, whatever its guise. He informed play with the earnestness of childhood and the spirituality of poesy. He could turn everything into a hook on which to hang a frolic. No dark care bestrode the horse behind this perennial youth. No haggard spectre, reflected from a turbid soul, sat moping in the prow of his boat, or kept step with him in the race. Like the Sun-god, he was buoyant and beautiful, careless, free, elastic, unfading. Years never cramped his bounding spirits, or dimmed the lustre of his soul. He was ever ready for prank and pastime, for freak and fun. Of all his loves at Elleray, boating was the chief. He was the Lord-High-Admiral of all the neighboring waters, and had a navy at his beck. He never wearied of the lake: whether she smiled or frowned on her devotee, he worshipped all the same. Time and season and weather were all alike to the sturdy skipper.

One howling winter's night he was still at his post, when Billy Balmer brought tidings that "his master was wellnigh frozen to death, and had icicles a finger-length hanging from his hair and beard." Though there was storm without, the great child had his undying sunshine within.

In 1811, he married Miss Jane Penny, of Ambleside, described as the belle of that region,—a woman of rare beauty of mind and person, gentle, true, and loving. She was either a pedestrian by nature, or converted by the arguments of her husband; for, a few years after marriage, they took a long, leisurely stroll on foot among the Highlands, making some three hundred and fifty miles in seven weeks. The union of these two bright spirits was singularly happy and congenial,—a pleasing exception to the long list of mismated authors. Nought was known between them but the tenderest attachment and unwearied devotion to each other. For nearly forty years they were true lovers; and when death took her, a void was left which nothing could fill. The bereaved survivor mourned her sincerely for more than seventeen years,—never, for an instant, forgetting her, until his own summons came. Some one has related the following touching incident. "When Wilson first met his class, in the University, after his wife's death, he had to adjudicate on the comparative merits of various essays which had been sent in on competition for a prize. He bowed to his class, and, in as firm voice as he could command, apologized for not having examined the essays,—'for,' said he, 'I could not see to read them in the

darkness of the shadow of the Valley of Death.' As he spoke, the tears rolled down his cheeks; he said no more, but waved his hand to his class, who stood up as he concluded and hurried out of the lecture-room."

The joys of Elleray were destined to be fleeting. The fortune of its master was melted away by the mismanagement of others, leaving him but a slender pittance. He bore his loss like a man, sorrowing, but not repining. The estate was given up, and a new home found with his mother, in Edinburgh. This was in 1815. Four years later, fortune had smiled on his cheerful labors, and given him the wherewithal to provide a home of his own for his wife and little ones,—the well-known house in Anne Street, which was for so many years the abode of domestic joys, the shrine of literature, the centre of friendship and hospitality. On his arrival at Edinburgh, Wilson, already famous, though young, finding fame an unsubstantial portion for a man with a family, looked about him for something more tangible, and determined to get his livelihood by the law. Kit North a lawyer, eating bread earned by legal sweat! The very idea seems comical enough. Yet it cannot be doubted, that, with his intellect, energy, eloquence, and capacity for work, he would, when driven to concentration and persistence by the spurs of necessity, duty, and affection, have run his race manfully, and reached the goal with the very foremost. Happily the question is an open one, for his affairs took another turn, which may have given Scotland one legal lord the less. For some time the briefless barrister diligently frequented

the Edinburgh courts, on the lookout for business. If he had few cases, he had excellent company in another "limb," of his own kidney, John Gibson Lockhart. These two roystering pundits, having little to do, filled up their moments mainly with much fun, keeping their faculties on the alert for whatever might turn up. The thing that soon turned up was "Blackwood."

The "Edinburgh Review"—the first in the field of the modern politico-literary periodicals—commenced its career in 1802, under the leadership of Brougham, Sydney Smith, Jeffrey, and Horner, all stanch Whigs. At first, literature had the second place, while politics occupied the chief seat; though in later years their relative positions have been reversed. Then, the one great thing in view was to have an able party-organ, the fearless champion of a certain policy in matters of State. The Whigs must be glorified, and the Tories put down, at all events, whatever else might be done. The rejoicings of the former, and the discomfiture of the latter, soon bore witness to the ability and success of this new-fledged champion. But this one-sided state of things could not continue always. The Tories, too, must have a mouth-piece to testify of their devotion to "the good old cause," and silence the clamors of their opponents. Accordingly, in 1809, appeared the "Quarterly Review," with Gifford as editor, and Scott, Southey, Croker, Canning, and others, as chief contributors. Under the conduct of such men, it became at once an organ of great power, yet still not quite what was wanted. It did not seem to meet entirely the demands of the case. It had not the wit, pungency,

and facility of its rival, and failed of securing so general a popularity. Its learning and gravity made it better suited to be the oracle of scholars than the organ of a party. Compared with its adversary across the Tweed, it was like a ponderous knight, cased in complete steel, attacking an agile, light-armed Moorish cavalier; or, to use Ben Jonson's illustration, like a Spanish great galleon opposed to the facile manoeuvres of a British man-of-war. For such an enemy there were needed other weapons. Well might the Tories say,—

"Non tali auxilio, nee defensoribus istis Tempus eget."

William Blackwood, the Prince-Street publisher, thought, that, to be successful, the war should be carried into Africa,—that the enemy must be met on his own ground with his own weapons. Hogg, whose weekly paper, "The Spy," had recently fallen through, also came to the conclusion that a sprightly monthly publication, of strong Tory proclivities, could not fail to do well. So, the times being ripe, Blackwood issued, in March, 1817, the first number of his new monthly, then called "The Edinburgh Monthly Magazine." Though himself a violent Tory, he, singularly enough, chose as his editors two Whigs,—Pringle the poet, and Cleghorn. Hogg lent his aid from the beginning. Scott, too, wrote now and then; and very soon Wilson made his appearance as "Eremus," contributing prose and verse. But the new magazine did not prove to be what was hoped,—a decided success. It was, in fact, quite flat and dull, having nothing life-like and characteristic. The radical error of attempting to build

on such heterogeneous foundations was soon perceived. Vigor of action could proceed only from entire unanimity of sentiment. Soon a rupture arose between editors and publisher, and the former seceded with the list of subscribers, leaving the latter his own master. He at once decided to remodel his periodical entirely,—to make it a thorough-going partisan, and to infuse a new life and vigor by means of personality and wit. How well he succeeded we all know. Thenceforward, until his death in 1834, he acted as editor, and a better one it would be difficult to find. The new management went into effect in October, 1817, with the famous No. VII. The difference was apparent at once, not only in the ability and style, but also in the title of the periodical, which was then changed to the name which it has borne ever since. In this number appeared the first really distinctive article of the magazine,—the celebrated "Translation from an Ancient Chaldee Manuscript,"—an allegorical account, in quaint Scripture phrase, of Blackwood's quarrel with his editors, and a savage onslaught on the leading Whigs of Edinburgh. So great a hubbub arose immediately on the appearance of this diatribe that it was suppressed as soon as possible; and though the editor offered an earnest apology for its insertion, he was finally mulcted in costs in a large sum for libel. But the general effect was highly favorable to the new magazine. It gave it—what had been lacking before—notoriety and a recognized position, and made its existence no longer a matter of indifference. It was known that Hogg conceived the idea, and wrote some portion

of the article. But few could believe, as was claimed by some, that all the sharp touches came from his hand. Hogg, it appears, wrote the first part; Wilson and Lockhart together contributed most of the remainder, amidst side-splitting guffaws, in a session in the house of the Dowager Wilson, in Queen Street; while the philosophic Sir William Hamilton, in adding his mite, was so moved by uproarious cachinnation that he fairly tumbled out of his chair.

The power and personality which thus early characterized the magazine were its leading features in after-years. Wilson and Lockhart became at once its chief contributors,—Wilson especially writing for its columns, with the most extraordinary profusion, on all conceivable topics, in prose and verse, for more than thirty years. By these articles he became known beyond his own circle, and on these his fame must ultimately rest. His daughter points to them with pride, and unhesitatingly expresses the opinion that they in themselves are a sufficient answer to all who doubt whether the great powers of their author ever found adequate expression. We are unable to agree with her. Able and brilliant as these articles unquestionably were, we cannot think that such glimpses and fragments—or, in fact, all the relics left by their author—furnish results at all commensurate with the man. Though Maga increased his immediate reputation, we think it diminished his lasting fame, by leading him to scatter, instead of concentrating his remarkable powers on some one great work. Scott and other great authorities saw so much native genius in

Wilson, that they often said that it lay in him to become the first man of his time, though they feared that his eccentricities and lack of steadiness might prove fatal to his success.

Though never really the editor of "Blackwood," Wilson was from the first its guiding spirit,—the leaven that leavened the whole lump. The way in which he threw himself into his work he described as follows:—"We love to do our work by fits and starts. We hate to keep fiddling away, an hour or two at a time, at one article for weeks. So off with our coat, and at it like a blacksmith. When we once get the way of it, hand over hip, we laugh at Vulcan and all his Cyclops. From nine of the morning till nine at night, we keep hammering away at the metal, iron or gold, till we produce a most beautiful article. A biscuit and a glass of Madeira, twice or thrice at the most,—and then to a well-won dinner. In three days, gentle reader, have We, Christopher North, often produced a whole magazine,—a most splendid number. For the next three weeks we were as idle as a desert, and as vast as an antre,—and thus on we go, alternately laboring like an ant, and relaxing in the sunny air like a dragon-fly, enamored of extremes." Of all his contributions, we think the "Noctes Ambrosianae" give by far the best idea of their author. They are perfectly characteristic throughout, though singularly various. Every mood of the man is apparent; and hardly anything is touched which is not adorned. Their pages reveal in turn the poet, the philosopher, the scholar, and the pugilist. Though continued during thirteen years, their freshness does not wither. To this

day we find the series delightful reading: we can always find something to our taste, whether we crave fish, flesh, or fowl. Whether we lounge in the sanctum, or roam over the moors, we feel the spirit of Christopher always with us.

It has been attempted, on Wilson's behalf, to excuse the fierce criticism and violent personality of Maga in its early days, on the plea that his influence over that periodical was less then than afterwards,—and that, as his control increased, the bitterness decreased. This is a special plea which cannot be allowed. The magazine was moulded, from the beginning, more by Wilson than by all others. If personalities had been offensive to him, they would not have been inserted, except in a limited degree. Lockhart, it is true, was far more bitter, but his influence was less. He could never have been successful in running counter to Wilson. Besides, though Wilson's nominal power might have been greater in the control of the magazine in later years, it was virtually but little, if at all, increased. The fact is, these onslaughts were perfectly congenial to his nature at that time.

His young blood made him impetuous, passionate, and fond of extremes,—perhaps unduly so. He was a warm lover, and a strong, though not malignant, hater,—and consequently deliberately made himself the fiercest of partisans. It was all pure fun with him, though it was death to the victims. He dearly loved to have a cut at the Cockneys, and was never happier than when running a tilt à l'outrance with what seemed to be a sham. Still, he felt no ill-will, and could see nothing wrong in the matter.

We are entirely disposed, even in reference to this period of his life, to accept the honest estimate which he made of himself, as "free from jealousy, spite, envy, and uncharitableness." When the fever of his youth had been somewhat cooled by time, his feelings and opinions naturally became more moderate, and his expression of them less violent. In his early days, when his mother heard of his having written an article for the "Edinburgh Review," she said, "John, if you turn Whig, this house is no longer big enough for us both." But his Toryism then was quite as good as hers. By-and-by, as party became less, and friendship more, he entertained at his house the leading Whigs, and admitted them to terms of intimacy. Even his daughter was allowed to marry a Whig. And in 1852 the old man hobbled out to give his vote for Macaulay the Whig, as representative in Parliament of the good town of Edinburgh. Conceive of such a thing in 1820! All this was but the gradual toning-down of a strong character by time and experience. "Blackwood" naturally exhibited some of the results of the change.

Much allowance must be made for the altered spirit of the times. A generation or two ago, there was everywhere far more of rancor and less of decorum in the treatment of politics and criticism than would now be tolerated. All the world permitted and expected strong partisanship, bitter personality, and downright abuse. They would have called our more sober reticence by the name of feebleness: their truculence we stigmatize as slander and Billingsgate. Wilson was an extremist in

everything; yet he strained but a point or two beyond his fellows. When the tide of party began gradually to subside, he fell with it. Mrs. Gordon has given a very correct picture of the state of things in those days:—

"It is impossible for us, at this time, to realize fully the state of feeling that prevailed in the literature and politics of the years between 1810 and 1830. We can hardly imagine why men who at heart respected and liked each other should have found it necessary to hold no communion, but, on the contrary, to wage bitter war, because the one was an admirer of the Prince Regent and Lord Castlereagh, the other a supporter of Queen Caroline and Mr. Brougham. We cannot conceive why a poet should be stigmatized as a base and detestable character, merely because he was a Cockney and a Radical; nor can we comprehend how gentlemen, aggrieved by articles in newspapers and magazines, should have thought it necessary to the vindication of their honor to horsewhip or shoot the printers or editors of the publications. Yet in 1817 and the following years such was the state of things in the capital of Scotland.... You were either a Tory and a good man, or a Whig and a rascal, and *vice versa*. If you were a Tory and wanted a place, it was the duty of all good Tories to stand by you; if you were a Whig, your chance was small; but its feebleness was all the more a reason why you should be proclaimed a martyr, and all your opponents profligate mercenaries." But parties changed, and men changed with them. It was a Whig ministry which gave Wilson, in 1852, a pension of two hundred

pounds.

Mrs. Gordon has praised her father as "the beau-ideal of what a critic should be, whose judgments will live as *parts* of literature, and not merely *talk* about it." That these so-called judgments are worthy to live, and will live, we fully believe; yet we could never think him a model critic, or even a great one. Though not deficient in analytic power, he wanted the judicial faculty. He could create, but he could not weigh coolly and impartially what was created. His whole make forbade it. He was impatient, passionate, reckless, furious in his likes and dislikes. His fervid enthusiasm for one author dictated a splendid tribute to a friend; while an irrational prejudice against another called out a terrific diatribe against a foe. In either case, there might be "thoughts that breathe and words that burn"; still, there was but little of true criticism. The matchless papers on Spenser and Homer represent one class, and the articles on Hazlitt and Leigh Hunt the other. While the former exhibit the tender sympathy of a poet and the enthusiasm of a scholar, the latter reveal the uncompromising partisan, swinging the hangman's cord, and brandishing the scourge of scorpions. Of the novelist's three kinds of criticism—"the slash, the tickle, and the plaster"—he recognized and employed only the two extremes. Neither in criticism nor in the conduct of life was Ovid's "*Medio tutissimus ibis*" ever a rule for him. In the "Noctes" for June, 1823, some of his characteristics are wittily set forth, with some spice of caricature, in a mock defiance given to Francis Jeffrey, "King of

Blue and Yellow," by the facetious Maginn, under his pseudonym of Morgan Odoherty:—"Christopher, by the grace of Brass, Editor of Blackwood's and the Methodist Magazines; Duke of Humbug, of Quiz, Puffery, Cutup, and Slashandhackaway; Prince Paramount of the Gentlemen of the Press, Lord of the Magaziners, and Regent of the Reviewers; Mallet of Whiggery, and Castigator of Cockaigne; Count Palatine of the Periodicals; Marquis of the Holy Poker; Baron of Balaam and Blarney; and Knight of the most stinging Order of the Nettle."

In 1820 Wilson was elected Professor of Moral Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh,—an office which he held for more than thirty years. The rival candidate was his friend, Sir William Hamilton, a firm Whig; and the canvass, which was purely a political one, was more fiery than philosophic. Wilson's character was the grand object of attack and defence, and round it all the hard fighting was done. Though it was pure and blameless, it offered some points which an unscrupulous adversary might readily misconstrue, with some show of plausibility. His free, erratic life, his little imprudences, his unguarded expressions, and the reckless "Chaldee MS.," might, with a little twisting, be turned to handles of offence, and wrested to his disadvantage. But the fanatic zeal of his opponents could not rest till their accusations had run through nearly the whole gamut of immoralities. He was not only a blasphemer towards God, but corrupt to wife and children. It seems comical enough at this day that he was obliged to bolster up his cause by sending round

to his respectable acquaintances for certificates of good moral character. When at last he triumphed by a greater than two-thirds vote, an attempt was made to reconsider; but the new Professor held his own, and the factious were drowned in hisses.

His personal relations to his pupils were singularly happy. A strange charm went out from his presence at all times, which fascinated all, and drew them to him. Their enthusiasm and love for him have been spoken of as "something more to be thought of than the proudest literary fame." "As he spoke, the bright blue eye looked with a strange gaze into vacancy, sometimes darkening before a rush of indignant eloquence; the tremulous upper lip curving with every wave of thought or hint of passion; and the golden gray hair floating on the old man's mighty shoulders,—if, indeed, that could be called age which seemed but the immortality of a more majestic youth." In his lecture-room utterances, there was an undue preponderance of rhetoric, declamation, and sentiment over logic, analysis, and philosophy. Yet he once said of himself, that he was "thoroughly logical and argumentative; not a rhetorician, as fools aver." Whether this estimate was right or wrong in the main may be a matter of question: we think it wrong. His genius, in our view, lay rather in pictorial passion than in ratiocination. At all events, as a teacher of philosophy, it appears to us that his conception of the duties of his office, and his style of teaching, were far inferior to those of his competitor and subsequent associate, Sir William Hamilton. The one taught like a trumpet-tongued poet, and the other like

an encyclopaedic philosopher. The personal magnetism of the former led captive the feelings, while the sober arguments of the latter laid siege to the understanding. The great fact which impressed Wilson's students was his overpowering oratory, and not his particular theory, or his train of reasoning. One of them compares the nature of his eloquence with that of the leading orators of his day, and thinks that in absolute power over the hearers it was greater than that of any other. The matter, too, as well as the manner of the lectures, receives commendation at the hands of this enthusiastic disciple. He says,—"It was something to have seen Professor Wilson,—this all confessed; but it was something also, and more than is generally understood, to have studied under him. Nothing now remains of the Professor's long series of lectures save a brief fragment or two. Here and there some pupil may be found, who has treasured up these Orphic sayings in his memory or his note-book; but to the world at large these utterances will be always unknown."

We have been considerably disappointed in Wilson's "Letters." We looked for something racy, having the full flavor of the author's best spirits. We found them plain matter-of-fact, not what we should term at all characteristic. Perhaps it was more natural that they should be of this sort. Letters are generally vent-holes for what does not escape elsewhere. Literary men, who are at the same time men of action, seldom write as good letters as do their more quiet brethren. And this is because they have so many more ways open to them of sending out what lies within. They

are depleted of almost all that is purely distinctive and personal, long before they sit down to pen an epistle to a friend. The formula might be laid down,—Given any man, and the quality of his correspondence will vary inversely as the quantity of his expression in all other directions. If, Wilson being the same man, fortune had hemmed him in, and contracted his sphere of action,—or if, as author, he had devoted himself to works of solid learning, instead of to the airy pages of "Blackwood,"—the sprightly humor and broad hilarity that were in him would have bubbled out in these "Letters," and the "Noctes" and the "Recreations" would have been a song unsung.

An anecdote of De Quincey, given by Wilson's biographer, is worth repeating. He and Wilson were warm friends during many long years, and innumerable were the sessions in which they met together to hold high converse. One stormy night the philosophic dreamer made his appearance at the residence of his friend the Professor, in Gloucester Place. The war of the elements increased to such a pitch, that the guest was induced to pass the night in his new quarters. Though the storm soon subsided, not so with the "Opium-Eater." The visit, begun from necessity, was continued from choice, until the revolving days had nearly made up the full year. He bothered himself but little with the family-arrangements, but dined in his own room, often turning night into day. His repast always consisted of coffee, boiled rice and milk, and mutton from the loin. Every day he sent for the cook, and solemnly gave her his instructions. The poor creature

was utterly overwhelmed by his grave courtesy and his "awful sight of words." Well she might be, for he addressed her in such terms as these:—"Owing to dyspepsia affecting my system, and the possibility of an additional disarrangement of the stomach taking place, consequences incalculably distressing would arise, so much so, indeed, as to increase nervous irritation, and prevent me from attending to matters of overwhelming importance, if you do not remember to cut the mutton in a diagonal, rather than a longitudinal form."

The picture of the aged Christopher, sitting by his own fireside, and surrounded by his grandchildren, is a charming one. He always loved to be with and to play with children,—a trait which he had in common with Agesilaus, Nelson, Burke, Napoleon, Wellington, and many others to whom was given the spirit of authority. As he grew old, he became passionately fond of the little men and women, and his affection was reciprocated. It was rare sport, when grandpapa kept open doors, and summoned the youthful company into his room. There were games, and stories, and sweetmeats, and presents. Sometimes notable feasts were set out, to which the little mouths did large justice, while the stalwart host took the part of waiter, and decorously responded to every wish. Of course, he played at fishing; for what would Christopher be without a hook? When an infant, he fished with thread and pin: when age had crippled him, the ruling passion still led him to limp into deep waters on a crutch, and cast out as of yore. So he and the youngsters angled

for imaginary trouts, with imaginary rods, lines, and flies, out of imaginary boats floating in imaginary lochs. And whether there were silly nibbles or sturdy bites, all agreed that they had glorious sport.

"With sports like these were all their cares beguiled;  
The sports of children satisfy the child."

And—the poet might have added—they often do much to satisfy the child of larger growth. It was thus that the old man kept alive the embers of his youth.

Charles Lamb once, considering whom of the world's vanished worthies he would rather evoke, singled out Fulke Greville, and also—if our memory is correct—Sir Thomas Browne. He thought, very sensibly, that any reasonable human being, if permitted to summon spirits from the vasty deep, would base his choice upon personal qualities, and not on mere general reputation. There would be an elective affinity, a principle of natural selection, (not Darwinian,) by which each would aim to draw forth a spirit to his liking. One would not summon the author of such and such a book, but this or that man. Milton wrote an admirable epic, but he would be awful in society. Shakspeare was a splendid dramatist, but one would hardly ask him for a boon-companion. Who could feel at ease under that omniscient eye? But, if the Plutonian shore might, for a few brief moments, render to our call its waiting shades, there are not

very many for whom our lips would sooner syllable the word of resurrection than for Christopher North. Only to look upon him in his prime would be worth much. To have a day with him on the moors, or an ambrosial night, would be a possession forever.

Even now we can almost see him standing radiant before us, illuminated and transfigured by the halo streaming round him. A huge man, towering far above his fellows; with Herculean shoulders, deep chest, broad back, sturdy neck, brawny arms, and massive fists; a being with vast muscle and tense nerve; of choicest make, and finest tone and temper,—robust and fine, bulky and sinewy, ponderous and agile, stalwart and elastic; a hammer to give, and a rock to receive blows; with the light tread of the deer, and the fell paw of the lion; crowned with a dome-like head, firm-set, capacious, distinctive, cleanly cut, and covered with long, flowing, yellow hair; a forehead broad, high, and rounded, strongly and equally marked by perception and imagination, wit and fancy; light blue eyes, capable of every expression, and varying with every mood, but generally having a far, dim, dreamy look into vacancy,—the gaze of the poet seeing visions; a firm, high, aquiline nose, indicating both intellect and spirit; flexile lips, bending to every breath of passion; a voice of singular compass and pliancy, responding justly to all his wayward humors and all his noble thoughts, now tremulous with tender passion, now rough with a partisan's fury; a man of strange contradictions and inconsistencies every way; a hand of iron with a glove of silk; a tiger's claw sheathed in velvet; one

who fought lovingly, and loved fiercely; champion of the arena, passionate poet, chastiser of brutes, caresser of children, friend of brawlers, lover of beauty; a pugilistic Professor of Moral Philosophy, who, in a thoroughly professional way, gayly put up his hands and scientifically floored his man in open day, at a public fair;<sup>1</sup> sometimes of the oak, sometimes of the willow; now bearing grief without a murmur, now howling in his pain like the old gods and heroes, making all Nature resonant with his cries; knowing nothing of envy save from the reports of others, yet never content to be outdone even in veriest trifles; a tropical heart and a cool brain; full of strong prejudices and fine charities, generous and exacting, heedless and sympathetic, quick to forgive, slow to resent, firm in love, transient in hate; to-day scaling the heavens with frantic zeal, to-morrow relaxing in long torpor; fond of long, solitary journeys, and given to conviviality; tender eyes that a word or a thought would fill, and hard lips that would never say die; a child of Nature thrilled with ecstasy by storm and by sunshine, and a cultured scholar hungering for new banquets; dreamer, doer, poet, philosopher, simple child, wisest patriarch; a true cosmopolitan, having largest aptitudes,—a tree whose roots sucked up juices from all the land, whose liberal fruits were showered all around; having a key to unlock all hearts, and a treasure for each; hospitable friend, husband-lover, doting

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<sup>1</sup> One who met him many years ago in Edinburgh, at the conclusion of a lecture, tells us, as we write these closing sentences, of his splendid figure, as he saw him twirl an Irish shillalah and show off its wonderful properties as an instrument of fun at a fair.

father; a boisterous wit, fantastic humorist, master of pathos, practical joker, sincere mourner; always an extremist, yielding to various excess; an April day, all smiles and tears; January and May met together; a many-sided fanatic; a universal enthusiast; a large-hearted sectarian; a hot-headed judge; a strong sketch full of color, with neutral tints nowhere, but full of fiery lights and deep glooms; buoyant, irrepressible, fuming, rampant, with something of divine passion and electric fire; gentle, earnest, true; a wayward prodigal, loosely scattering abroad where he should bring together; great in things indifferent, and indifferent in many great ones; a man who would have been far greater, if he had been much less,—if he had been less catholic and more specific; immeasurably greater in his own personality than in any or all of his deeds either actual or possible;—such was the man Christopher North, a Hercules-Apollo, strong and immortally beautiful,—a man whom, with all his foibles, negligences, and ignorances, we stop to admire, and stay to love.

# "CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY WHOM YE WILL SERVE."

Yes, tyrants, you hate us, and fear while you hate  
The self-ruling, chain-breaking, throne-shaking State!  
The night-birds dread morning,—your instinct is true,—  
The day-star of Freedom brings midnight for you!

Why plead with the deaf for the cause of mankind?  
The owl hoots at noon that the eagle is blind!  
"We ask not your reasons,—'t were wasting our time,—  
Our life is a menace, our welfare a crime!

"We have battles to fight, we have foes to subdue,—  
Time waits not for us, and we wait not for you!  
The mower mows on, though the adder may writhe  
And the copper-head coil round the blade of his scythe!

"No sides in this quarrel," your statesmen may urge,  
Of school-house and wages with slave-pen and scourge!—  
No sides in the quarrel! proclaim it as well  
To the angels that fight with the legions of hell!

They kneel in God's temple, the North and the South,  
With blood on each weapon and prayers in each mouth.  
Whose cry shall be answered? Ye Heavens, attend

The lords of the lash as their voices ascend!

"O Lord, we are shaped in the image of Thee,—  
Smite down the base millions that claim to be free,  
And lend Thy strong arm to the soft-handed race  
Who eat *not* their bread in the sweat of their face!"

So pleads the proud planter. What echoes are these?  
The bay of his bloodhound is borne on the breeze,  
And, lost in the shriek of his victim's despair,  
His voice dies unheard.—Hear the Puritan's prayer!

"O Lord, that didst smother mankind in Thy flood,  
The sun is as sackcloth, the moon is as blood,  
The stars fall to earth as untimely are cast  
The figs from the fig-tree that shakes in the blast!

"All nations, all tribes in whose nostrils is breath,  
Stand gazing at Sin as she travails with Death!  
Lord, strangle the monster that struggles to birth,  
Or mock us no more with Thy 'Kingdom on Earth'!"

"If Ammon and Moab must reign in the land  
Thou gavest Thine Israel, fresh from Thy hand,  
Call Baäl and Ashtaroth out of their graves  
To be the new gods for the empire of slaves!"

Whose God will ye serve, O ye rulers of men?  
Will ye build you new shrines in the slave-breeder's den?

Or bow with the children of light, as they call  
On the Judge of the Earth and the Father of All?

Choose wisely, choose quickly, for time moves apace,—  
Each day is an age in the life of our race!  
Lord, lead them in love, ere they hasten in fear  
From the fast-rising flood that shall girdle the sphere!

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# THE HORRORS OF SAN DOMINGO.<sup>2</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### INTRODUCTION OF SLAVERY—THE SLAVE-TRADE—AFRICAN TRIBES— THE CODE NOIR—THE MULATTOES

It will be necessary for the present to omit the story of the settlement and growth of the French Colony, and of the pernicious commercial restrictions which swelled the unhappy heritage of the island, in order that we may reach, in this and a succeeding article, the great points of interest connected with the Negro, his relation to the Colony and complicity with its final overthrow.

The next task essential to our plan is to trace the entrance of Negro Slavery into the French part of the island, to describe the victims, and the legislation which their case inspired.

The first French Company which undertook a regular trade with the west coast of Africa was an association of merchants of Dieppe, without authority or privileges. They settled a little

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<sup>2</sup> See Numbers LVI., LVIII., and LIX. of this magazine.

island in the Senegal, which was called St. Louis. This property soon passed into the hands of a more formal association of Rouen merchants, who carried on the trade till 1664, the date of the establishment of the West-India Company, to which they were obliged to sell their privileges for one hundred and fifty thousand livres. This great Company managed its African business so badly, that it was withdrawn from their hands in 1673, and made over as a special interest to a Senegal Company. The trade, in palm-oil, ivory, etc., was principally with France, and negro slaves for the colonies do not yet appear in numbers to attract attention.<sup>3</sup> But in 1679 this Company engaged with the Crown to deliver yearly, for a term of eight years, two thousand negroes, to be distributed among the French Antilles. This displaced a previous engagement, made in 1675, for the delivery of eight hundred negroes. The Company had also to furnish as many negroes for the galleys at Marseilles as His Majesty should find convenient. And the Crown offered a bounty of thirteen livres per head for every negro, to be paid in "pieces of India."

This is a famous phrase in the early annals of the slave-trade. Reckoning by "pieces" was customary in the transaction of business upon the coast of Africa. Merchandise, provisions, and presents to the native princes had their value thus expressed, as

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<sup>3</sup> Du Tertre, the missionary historian of the Antilles, proudly says, previously to this date, that the opinion of France in favor of personal liberty still shielded a French deck from the traffic: "Selon les lois de la France, qui abhorre la servitude sur toutes les nations du monde, et ou tous les esclaves recouvrent heureusement la liberté perdue, sitost qu'ils y abordent, et qu'ils en touchent la terre."

well as slaves. If the negro merchant asked ten pieces for a slave, the European trader offered his wares divided into ten portions, each portion being regarded as a "piece," without counting the parts which made it up. Thus, ten coarse blankets made one piece, a musket one piece, a keg of powder weighing ten pounds was one, a piece of East-India blue calico four pieces, ten copper kettles one piece, one piece of chintz two pieces, which made the ten for which the slave was exchangeable: and at length he became commercially known as a "piece of India." The bounty of thirteen livres was computed in France upon the wholesale value of the trinkets and notions which were used in trade with Africa.

The traffic by pieces is as old as the age of Herodotus;<sup>4</sup> it was originally a dumb show of goods between two trading parties ignorant of each other's language, but at length it represented a transaction which the parties should have been ashamed to mention.

Although this second Senegal Company was protected by the rigid exclusion, under pain of fine and confiscation, of all other Frenchmen from the trade, it soon fell into debt and parted with its privilege to a third Company, and this in turn was restricted by the formation of a Guinea Company, so that it soon sold out to a fourth Senegal Company, which passed in 1709 into the hands of Rouen merchants who started a fifth; and this too was merged in the West-India Company which was formed in 1718. So little did

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<sup>4</sup> *Melpomene*, § 196.

the agriculture of the islands, overstocked with *engagés*, justify as yet the slave-traders in the losses and expenses which they incurred.

The Guinea Company was bound to import only one thousand yearly into all the French Antilles; but it did not flourish until it became an *Asiento* Company, when, during the War of Succession, a Bourbon mounted the throne of Spain. It was called *Asiento* because the Spanish Government *let*, or farmed by *treaty*, the privilege of supplying its colonies with slaves. The two principal articles of this contract, which was to expire in 1712, related to the number of negroes and the rent of the privilege. If the war continued, the French Company was bound to furnish Spain with thirty-eight thousand negroes during the ten years of the contract, but in case of peace, with forty-eight thousand. Each negro that the Company could procure was let to it for 33-1/3 piastres, in pieces of India. In consequence of this treaty, the ports of Chili and Peru, and those in the South Sea, from which all other nations were excluded, stood open to the French, who carried into them vast quantities of merchandise besides the slaves, and brought home great sums in coin and bars. The raw gold and silver alone which they imported for the year 1709 was reckoned at thirty millions of livres.

But at the Peace of Utrecht, Louis XIV., exhausted by an unprofitable war, relinquished his *asiento* to the English, who were eager enough to take it. It was for this advantage that Marlborough had been really fighting; at least, it was the only

one of consequence that Blenheim and Malplaquet secured to his country.

The reign of Louis XV. commenced in 1715. By letters-patent which he issued on the 16th of January, 1716, he granted permission to all the merchants in his kingdom to engage in the African trade, provided their ships were fitted out only in the five ports of Rouen, Rochelle, Bordeaux, Nantes, and St. Malo; nine articles were specially framed to encourage the trade in slaves, as by the Peace of Utrecht all the South-Sea ports were closed to the French, and only their own colonies remained. France no longer made great sums of money by the trade in slaves, but her colonies began to thrive and demand a new species of labor. The poor white emigrants were exhausted and demoralized by an apprenticeship which had all the features of slavery, and by a climate which will not readily permit a white man to become naturalized even when he is free.

It is the opinion of some French anti-slavery writers that the *engagés* might have tilled the soil of Hayti to this day, if they had labored for themselves alone. This is doubtful; the white man can work in almost every region of the Southern States, but he cannot raise cotton and sugar upon those scorching plains. It is not essential for the support of an anti-slavery argument to suppose that he can. Nor is it of any consequence, so far as the question of free-labor is concerned, either to affirm or to deny that the white man can raise cotton in Georgia or sugar in Louisiana. The blacks themselves, bred to the soil and wanted to

its products, will organize free-labor there, and not a white man need stir his pen or his hoe to solve the problem.

At first it seems as if the letters-patent of Louis XV. were inspired by some new doctrine of free-trade. And he did cherish the conviction that in the matter of the slave-trade it was preferable to a monopoly; but his motive sprang from the powerful competition of England and Holland, which the Guinea Company faced profitably only while the War of Succession secured to it the *asiento*. The convention of merchants which Louis XIV. called in Paris, during the year 1701, blamed monopolies in the address which it drew up, and declared freedom of trade to be more beneficial to the State; but this was partly because the Guinea Company arbitrarily fixed the price of slaves too high, and carried too few to the colonies.

So a free-trade in negroes became at last a national necessity. Various companies, however, continued to hold or to procure trading privileges, as the merchants were not restrained from engaging in commerce in such ways as they preferred. The Cape-Verde, the South-Sea, the Mississippi or Louisiana, and the San-Domingo Companies tried their fortunes still. But they were all displaced, and free-trade itself was swallowed up, by the union of all the French Antilles under the great West-India Company of 1716. This was hardly done before the Government discovered that the supply of negroes was again diminishing, partly because so extensive a company could not undertake the peculiar risks and expenses of a traffic in slaves. So in the matter of negroes

alone trade was once more declared free in 1741, burdened only with a certain tax upon every slave imported.

At this time the cultivation of sugar alone in the principal French islands consumed all the slaves who could be procured. The cry for laborers was loud and exacting, for the French now made as much sugar as the English, and were naturally desirous that more negroes should surrender the sweets of liberty to increase its manufacture. In less than forty years the average annual export of French sugar had reached 80,000 hogsheads. In 1742 it was 122,541 hogsheads, each of 1200 pounds. The English islands brought into the market for the same year only 65,950 hogsheads, a decrease which the planters attributed to the freedom enjoyed by the French of carrying their crops directly to Spanish consumers without taking them first to France. But whatever may have been the reason, the French were determined to hold and develop the commercial advantage which this single product gained for them. The English might import as many slaves and lay fresh acres open to the culture, but the French sugar was discovered to be of a superior quality; that of San Domingo, in particular, was the best in the world.

The French planter took his slaves on credit, and sought to discharge his debt with the crops which they raised. This increased the consumption of negroes, and he was constantly in debt for fresh ones. To stimulate the production of sugar, the Government lifted half the entry-tax from each negro who was destined for that culture.

A table which follows shortly will present the exports for 1775 of the six chief products of San Domingo, Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Cayenne. But we must say something first about the value of the *livre*.

In the Merovingian times, the right of coining money belonged to many churches and abbeys,—among others, to St. Martin de Tours. There were seigniorial and episcopal coins in France till the reign of Philip Augustus, who endeavored to reduce all the coin in his kingdom to a uniform type. But he was obliged still to respect the money of Tours, although he had acquired the old right of coinage that belonged to it. So that there was a livre of Paris and a livre of Tours, called *livre tournois*: the latter being worth five deniers less than the livre of Paris. The tendency of the Crown to absorb all the local moneys of France was not completely successful till the reign of Louis XIV., who abolished the Paris livre and made the livre tournois the money of account. The earliest livre was that of Charlemagne, the silver value of which is representable by eighty cents. It steadily depreciated, till it was worth in the reign of Louis XIV. about sixty cents, from which it fell rapidly to the epoch of the Revolution, when its value was only nineteen cents, and the franc took its place.

It is plain from this, that, when livres are spoken of during a period of a hundred years, their precise equivalent in English or American money cannot be stated,—still less their market-relations to all the necessaries of life. The reader can therefore

procure from the statistics of these periods only an approximative idea of the values of crops and the wealth created by their passing into trade.

A great deal of the current specie of the island consisted of Spanish and Portuguese coin, introduced by illegal trade. A Spanish *piastre gourde* in 1776 was rated at 7-1/2 livres, and sometimes was worth 8-1/4 livres. A *piastre gourde* was a dollar. If we represent this dollar by one hundred cents, we can approach the value of the French livre, because the *gourde* passed in France for only 5-1/4 livres; that is, a livre had already fallen to the value of the present franc, or about nineteen cents.

The difference of value between Paris and the colony was the cause of great embarrassment. Projects for establishing an invariable money were often discussed, but never attempted. All foreign specie ought to have become merchandise in the colony, and to have passed according to its title and weight. Exchange of France with San Domingo was at 66-2/3: that is, 66 livres, 13 sols, 4 deniers tournois were worth a hundred livres in the Antilles. Deduct one-third from any sum to find the sum in livres tournois.

Pounds. Livres.

Sugar, {To France, 166,353,834 for 61,849,381

{Abroad, 104,099,866 " 38,703,720

Coffee, {To France, 61,991,699 " 29,421,039

{Abroad, 50,058,246 " 23,757,464

Indigo, {To France, 2,067,498 " 17,573,733

{Abroad, 1,130,638 " 9,610,423

Cacao, {To France, 1,562,027 " 1,093,419

{Abroad, 794,275 " 555,992

Roucou,<sup>5</sup> {To France, 352,216 " 220,369

{Abroad, 153,178 " 95,838

Cotton, {To France, 3,407,157 " 11,017,892

{Abroad, 102,011 " 255,027

This table, with its alluring figures, that seem to glean gratefully after the steps of labor, is the negro's manifesto of the French slave-trade. The surprising totals betray the sudden development of that iniquity under the stimulus of national ambition. The slave expresses his misery in the ciphers of luxury. The single article of sugar, which lent a new nourishment to the daily food of every country, sweetened the child's pap, the invalid's posset, and the drinks of rich and poor, yielded its property to medicine, made the nauseous palatable, grew white and frosted in curious confections, and by simply coming into use stimulated the trades and inventions of a world, was the slave's insinuation of the bitterness of his condition. Out of the eaten came forth meat, and out of the bitter sweetness.

In 1701, Western San Domingo had 19,000 negroes: in

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<sup>5</sup> This was the scarlet dye of the Caribs, which they procured from the red pulpy covering of the seeds of the *Bixa orellana*, by simply rubbing their bodies with them. The seeds, when macerated and fermented, yielded a paste, which was imported in rolls under the name of *Orléan*, and was used in dyeing. It was also put into chocolate to deepen its color and lend an astringency which was thought to be wholesome. Tonic pills were made of it. The fibres of the bark are stronger than those of hemp. The name *Roucou* is from the Carib *Urucu*. In commerce the dye is also known as Annatto.

1777, a moderate estimate gives 300,000, not including 50,000 children under fourteen years of age,—and in the other French colonial possessions 500,000. In the year 1785, sixty-five slavers brought to San Domingo 21,662 negroes, who were sold for 43,236,216 livres; and 32,990 were landed in the smaller French islands. In 1786, the value of the negroes imported was estimated at 65,891,395 livres, and the average price of a negro at that time was 1997 livres.

But we must recollect that these figures represent only living negroes. A yearly percentage of dead must be added, to complete the number taken from the coast of Africa. The estimate was five per cent, to cover the unavoidable losses incurred in a rapid and healthy passage; but such passages were a small proportion of the whole number annually made, and the mortality was irregular. It was sometimes frightful; a long calm was one long agony: asphyxia, bloody flux, delirium and suicide, and epidemics swept between the narrow decks, as fatally, but more mercifully than the kidnappers who tore these people from their native fields. The shark was their sexton, and the gleam of his white belly piloted the slaver in his regular track across the Atlantic. What need to revive the accounts of the horrors of the middle passage? We know from John Newton and other Englishmen what a current of misery swept in the Liverpool slavers into the western seas. The story of French slave-trading is the same. I can find but one difference in favor of the French slaver, that he took the shackles from his cargo after it had been a day or two at sea.

The lust for procuring the maximum of victims, who must be delivered in a minimum of time and at the least expense, could not dally with schemes to temper their suffering, or to make avarice obedient to common sense. It was a transaction incapable of being tempered. One might as well expect to ameliorate the act of murder. Nay, swift murder would have been affectionate, compared with this robbery of life.

Nor is the consumption of negroes by the sea-voyage the only item suggested by the annual number actually landed. We should have to include all the people maimed and killed in the predatory excursions of native chiefs or Christian kidnappers to procure their cargoes. A village was not always surprised without resistance. The most barbarous tribes would defend their liberty. We can never know the numbers slain in wars which were deliberately undertaken to stock the holds of slavers.

Nor shall we ever know how many victims dropped out of the ruthless caravan, exhausted by thirst and forced marches, on the routes sometimes of three hundred leagues from the interior to the sea. They were usually divided into files containing each thirty or forty slaves, who were fastened together by poles of heavy wood, nine feet long, which terminated in a padlocked fork around the neck. When the caravan made a halt, one end of the pole was unfastened and dropped upon the ground. When it dropped, the slave was anchored; and at night his arm was tied to the end of the pole which he carried, so that a whole file was hobbled during sleep. If any one became too enfeebled

to preserve his place, the brutal keepers transferred him to the swifter voracity of the hyena, who scented the wake of the caravan across the waste to the sea's margin, where the shark took up the trail.

The census of the slaves in San Domingo was annually taken upon the capitation-tax which each planter had to pay; thus the children, and negroes above forty-five years of age, escaped counting. But in 1789, Schoelcher says that the census declared five hundred thousand slaves; that is, in twelve years the increase had been two hundred thousand. How many negroes deported from Africa do these figures represent! what number who died soon after landing, too feeble and diseased to become acclimated!

Here is the prospectus of an expedition to the coast of Guinea in 1782 for the purpose of landing seven hundred slaves in the Antilles. They were shipped in two vessels, one of six hundred tons, the other a small corvette.

Outfit of large vessel, 150,000 livres

" " corvette, 50,000 "

Purchase of 700 negroes at 300 livres per head, 210,000

"

Insurance upon the passage at 15 per cent., 61,500 "

" " " premiums at 15 per cent., 9,225 "

—

Total cost of the passage, 480,725 "

The passage was a very prosperous one: only 35 negroes spoiled, or 5 per cent, of the whole number. The remaining

665 were sold in San Domingo at an average price of 2,000 livres, making 1,330,000 "

Deduct commissions of ships' officers and correspondents in West Indies, at 11-1/2 per cent 152,950 "

—

1,177,050 "

Deduct expenses in West Indies, 17,050 "

—

1,160,000 "

Deduct exchange, freight, and insurance upon return passage of the vessels, 20 per cent., 232,000 "

—

928,000 "

Deduct crews' wages for 10 months, reckoning the length of the voyage at 13 months, 55,000 "

—

873,000 "

Add value of returned vessels, 90,000 "

—

963,000 "

Deduct original cost of the whole, 480,725 "

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The profit remains, 100 per cent., 482,275 "

Two hundred and seventy-four slavers entered the ports of San Domingo, from 1767 to 1774, bringing 79,000 negroes. One-third of these perished from various causes, including the cold of the mountains and the unhealthiness of the coffee-plantations, so that only 52,667 remained. These could not naturally increase,

for the mortality was nearly double the number of births, and the negroes had few children during the first years after their arrival. Only one birth was reckoned to thirty slaves. There was always a great preponderance of males, because they could bear the miseries of the passage better than the women, and were worth more upon landing. Include also the effects of forced labor, which reduced the average duration of a slave's life to fifteen years, and carried off yearly one-fifteenth of the whole number, and the reason for the slaver's profits and for his unscrupulous activity become clear.

Out of the sugar, thus clarified with blood, the glittering frosted-work of colonial splendor rose. A few great planters debauched the housekeeping of the whole island. Beneath were debts, distrust, shiftlessness, the rapacity of imported officials, the discontent of resident planters with the customs of the mother-country, the indifference of absentees, the cruel rage for making the most and the best sugar in the world, regardless of the costly lives which the mills caught and crushed out with the canes. Truly, it was sweet as honey in the mouth, and suddenly became bitter as wormwood in the belly.

Let us glance at the people who were thus violently torn from the climate, habits, diet, and customs which created their natural and congenial soil, from their mother-tongues, their native loves and hatreds, from the insignificant, half-barbarous life, which certainly poisoned not the life-blood of a single Christian, though it sweetened not his tea. What bitterness has crept into the great

heart of Mr. Carlyle, which beats to shatter the affectations and hypocrisies of a generation, and to summon a civilized world to the worship of righteousness and truth! Is this a Guinea trader or a prophet who is angry when Quashee prefers his pumpkins and millet, reared without the hot guano of the lash, and who will not accept the reduction of a bale of cotton or a tierce of sugar, though Church and State be disinfected of slavery?<sup>6</sup> It is a drop of planter's gall which the sham-hater shakes testily from his corroded pen. How far the effluvia of the slave-ship will be wafted, into what strange latitudes of temperance and sturdy independence, even to the privacy of solemn and high-minded thought! A nation can pass through epochs of the black-death, and recover and improve its average health; but does a people ever completely rally from this blackest death of all?

The Guinea trader brought to San Domingo in the course of eighty years representatives of almost every tribe upon the west coast of Africa and of its interior for hundreds of miles. Many who were thus brought were known only by the names of their obscure neighborhoods; they mingled their shade of color and of savage custom with the blood of a new Creole nation of slaves. With these unwilling emigrants the vast areas of Africa ran together into the narrow plains at the end of a small island;

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<sup>6</sup> *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, No. I. pp. 32, 34; No. II. pp. 23, 25, 47; No. III. p. 3. "And you, Quashee, my pumpkin, idle Quashee, I say you must get the Devil sent away from your elbow, my poor dark friend!" We say amen to that, with the reserved privilege of designating the Devil. "Ware that Colonial Sand-bank! Starboard now, the Nigger Question!" Starboard it is!

affinity and difference were alike obedient to the whip of the overseer, whose law was profit, and whose method cruelty, in making this strange people grow.

When a great continent has been thus ransacked to stock a little farm, the qualities which meet are so various, and present such lively contrasts, that the term *African* loses all its application. From the Mandingo, the Foulah, the Jolof, through the Felatahs, the Eboes, the Mokos, the Feloups, the Coromantines, the Bissagos, all the sullen and degraded tribes of the marshy districts and islands of the Slave Coast, and inland to the Shangallas, who border upon Southwestern Abyssinia, the characters are as distinct as the profiles or the colors. The physical qualities of all these people, their capacity for labor, their religious tendencies and inventive skill, their temperaments and diets, might be constructed into a sliding scale, starting with a Mandingo, or a Foulah such as Ira Aldridge, and running to earth at length in a Papel.

The Mandingoes of the most cultivated type seldom found their way to the West Indies. But if ever slave became noticeable for his temperate and laborious habits, a certain enterprise and self-subsistence, a cleanly, regular, and polished way, perhaps keeping his master's accounts, or those of his own private ventures, in Arabic, and mindful of his future, he was found to be a Mandingo. Their States are on the Senegal; Arabic is not their language, but they are zealous Mohammedans, and have schools in which the children learn the Koran. The men

are merchants and agriculturists; they control the trade over a great extent of country, and the religion also, for the Koran is among the wares they carry, and they impose at once the whole form of their social condition. These Northern African nations have been subjected to Arab and Moorish influence, and they make it plain that great movements have taken place in regions which are generally supposed to be sunk in savage quiescence. The Mandingoes, notwithstanding a shade of yellow in the complexion, are still negroes, that is, they are an aboriginal people, improved by contact with Islamism, and capable of self-development afterwards; but the Moors never ruled them, nor mingled with their blood. Their features are African, in the popular sense of that word, without one Semitic trace. Awakened intelligence beams through frank and pleasing countenances, and lifts, without effacing, the primitive type. Undoubtedly, their ancestors sprang into being on sites where an improved posterity reside. But what a history lies between the Fetichism which is the mental form of African religious sentiment, and the worship of one God without image or symbol!

In the administration of justice, some classes of their criminals are sold into slavery, and occasionally a Mandingo would be kidnapped. But there are many Mandingoes who are still pagans, and know nothing of Arabic or commerce, yet who have the excellences of the dominant tribes: these were found in the gangs of the slave-merchant.

So were the Jolofs, handsome, black as jet, with features

more regular than the Mandingoes, almost European, excepting the lips: a nonchalant air, very warlike upon occasion, but not disposed to labor. They have magistrates, and some forms for the administration of justice, but a civilization less developed than the Mandingo, in consequence of early contact with Christians. It is said that the slave-traders taught them to lie and steal, and to sell each other, whenever they could not supply a sufficient number of their neighbors, the simple and pastoral Serreres.

The Foulahs live upon the elevated plateaus of Senegambia and around the sources of the Rio Grande. The Mandingoes introduced the Koran among them. French writers represent them as being capable of sustained labor; they cultivate carefully the millet, wheat, cotton, tobacco, and lentils, and have numerous herds. Their mutton is famous, and their oxen are very fat. The Foulahs are mild and affable, full of *esprit*, fond of hunting and music; they shun brandy, and like sweet drinks. It is not difficult to govern them, as they unite good sense to quiet manners, and have an instinct for propriety. Their horror of slavery is so great, that, if one of them is condemned to be sold, all the neighbors club together to pay his forfeit or purchase a ransom; so that few of them were found in the slave-ships, unless seized in the fields, or carried off from the villages by night.

They have mechanics who work in iron and silver, leather and wood; they build good houses, and live in them cleanly and respectable. The Foulahs show, quite as decidedly as the Mandingoes, that great passions and interests have given to these

parts of Africa a history and developed stocks of men. When the Foulahs are compared with the wandering Felatahs, from whom they came, who speak the same language and wear the same external characters, it will be seen how Nature has yearned for her children in these unknown regions, and set herself, for their sakes, great stints of work, in that motherly ambition to bring them forward in the world. Yes,—thought the Guinea trader,—these skilful Foulahs are Nature's best gifts to man.

Their pure African origin is, however, still a contested point. Many ethnologists are unwilling to attribute so much capacity to a native negro tribe. D'Eichthal objects, that "a pretended negro people, pastoral, nomadic, warlike, propagating a religious faith, to say nothing of the difference in physical characteristics, offers an anomaly which nothing can explain. It would force us to attribute to the black race, whether for good or for evil, acts and traits that are foreign to its nature. To cite only one striking example, let me recall that Job Ben Salomon, the African, who in the last century was carried to America and thence to England, and was admired by all who knew him for the loftiness of his character, the energy of his religious fanaticism, and the extent of his intelligence,—this Ben Salomon, who has been cited as a model of that which the negro race could produce, did not belong to that race; he was a Foulah."<sup>7</sup>

D'Eichthal develops at great length his theory, that the Foulahs are descended from some Eastern people of strong Malay

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<sup>7</sup> *Mémoires de la Société Ethnologique*, Tom. I. Ptie 2, p. 147.

characters, who found their way to their present site through Madagascar, along the coast, to Cordofan, Darfour, and Haoussa. They are bronzed, or copper-colored, or like polished mahogany,—the red predominating over the black. Their forms are tall and slim, with small hands and feet, thin curved noses, long hair braided into several queues, and an erect profile. Certain negro traits do not exist in them.

Burmeister, who saw Ira Aldridge, the Foulah actor, play in Macbeth, Othello, and his other famous parts, saw nothing negro about him, except the length of his arm, the shrillness of his voice in excitement, the terrible animality of the murder-scenes, and his tendency to exaggerate. "The bright-colored nails were very evident, and his whole physiognomy, in spite of his beard, was completely negro-like."<sup>8</sup>

But if Ira Aldridge's exaggerated style of acting points to an African origin, would it not be better, if some of our distinguished actors, who are presumptively white before the foot-lights, took out free-papers at once? We have seen Macbeth and Othello so "created" by the Caucasian models of the stage, that but one line of Shakspeare remained in our memory, and narrowly escaped the lips,—"Out, hyperbolical fiend!"

It is not unlikely that the Felatah was mixed with Moorish or Kabylic blood to make the Foulah. If so, it proves the important fact, that, when the good qualities of the negro are crossed

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<sup>8</sup> *The Comparative Anatomy and Physiology of the African Negro*, by Hermann Burmeister.

with a more advanced race, the product will be marked with intelligence, mobility, spiritual traits, and an organizing capacity. Felatah blood has mixed with white blood in the Antilles; the Jolof and the Eboe have yielded primitive affections and excellences to a new mulatto breed. This great question of the civilizable qualities of a race cannot be decided by quoting famous isolated cases belonging to pure breeds, but only by observing and comparing the average quality of the pure or mixed.

When we approach the Slave Coast itself, strong contrasts in appearance and culture are observable among the inhabitants; they are all negroes, but in different social conditions, more or less liable to injury from the presence of the slaver, and yielding different temperaments and qualities to colonial life. The beautiful and fertile amphitheatre called Whidah, in North latitude  $6^{\circ}$ , with Dahomey just behind it, is populous with a superior race. Where did it come from? The area which it occupies has only about fifty miles of coast and less than thirty of interior; its people are as industrious and thrifty as any on the face of the earth. They never raised sugar and indigo with enthusiasm, but at home their activity would have interpreted to Mr. Carlyle a soul above pumpkins. They cultivated every square foot of ground up to the threshold of their dwellings; the sides of ditches, hedges, and inclosures were planted with melons and vegetables, and the roads between the villages shrank to foot-paths in the effort to save land for planting. On the day when a

crop was harvested, another was sown.

Their little State was divided into twenty-six provinces or counties, ruled by hereditary lords. The King was simply the most important one of these. Here were institutions which would have deserved the epithet *patriarchal*, save for the absence of overseers and the auction-block. The men worked in the field, the women spun at home. Two markets were held every four days in two convenient places, which were frequented by five or six thousand traders. Every article for sale had its appropriate place, and the traffic was conducted without tumult or fraud. A judge and four inspectors went up and down to hear and settle grievances. The women had their stalls, at which they sold articles of their own manufacture from cotton or wood, plates, wooden cups, red and blue paper, salt, cardamom-seeds, palm-oil, and calabashes.

How did it happen that such a thrifty little kingdom learned the shiftlessness of slave-trading? Early navigators discovered that they had one passion, that of gaming. This was sedulously cultivated by the French and Portuguese who had colonies at stake. A Whidah man, after losing all his money and merchandise, would play for his wife and children, and finally for himself. A slave-trader was always ready to purchase him and his interesting family from the successful gamester, who, in turn, often took passage in the same vessel. In this way Whidah learned to procure slaves for itself, who could be gambled away more conveniently: the markets exposed for sale monthly one

thousand human beings, taken from the inferior tribes of the coast. The whole administration of justice of these superior tribes was overthrown by the advent of the European, who taught them to punish theft, adultery, and other crimes by putting up the criminal for sale.

The Whidah people were Fetich-worshippers; so were the inhabitants of Benin. But the latter had the singularity of refusing to sell a criminal, adjudged to slavery, to the foreign slave-traders, unless it was a woman. They procured, however, a great many slaves from the interior for the Portuguese and French. The Benin people dealt in magic and the ordeal; they believed in apparitions, and filled up their cabins with idols to such an extent as nearly to eject the family.

The slaves of the river Calabar and the Gaboon were drawn from very inferior races, who lived in a state of mutual warfare for the purpose of furnishing each other to the trader. They kidnapped men in the interior, and their expeditions sometimes went so far that the exhausted victims occasioned the slaver a loss of sixty per cent, upon his voyage. The toughest of these people were the Eboes; the most degraded were the Papels and Bissagos.

The Congo negro was more intelligent than these; he understood something of agriculture and the keeping of cattle. He made Tombo wine and some kinds of native cloth. The women worked in the fields with their children slung to their backs. The Congo temperament near the coast was mild and even, like the climate; but there dwelt in the mountains the

Azikio and N'teka, who were cannibals. The Congoes in Cuba had the reputation of being stupid, sensual, and brutal; but these African names have always been applied without much discrimination.

The slavers collected great varieties of negroes along the coasts of Loango and Benguela; some of them were tall, well-made, and vigorous, others were stunted and incapable. They were all pagans, accustomed to Fetich- and serpent-worship, very superstitious, without manliness and dignity, stupid and unimpressible.

The Benguela women learned the panel game from the Portuguese. This is an ugly habit of enticing men to such a point of complicity, that an indignant husband, and a close calculator, can appear suddenly and denounce the victim. Many a slave was furnished in this way.—But we restrain the pen from tracing the villanous and savage methods, suggested by violence or fraud or lust, to keep those decks well stocked over which the lilies of France drooped with immunity.

All these negroes differed much in their sensitiveness to the condition of slavery. Many of them suffered silently, and soon disappeared, killed by labor and homesickness. Others committed suicide, in the belief that their spirits would return to the native scenes. It was not uncommon for a whole family to attempt to reinhabit their old cabin in this way. The planters attributed these expensive deeds of manumission to a depraved taste or mania; but we do not know that they laid Greek under

contribution for a term, as Dr. Cartwright did, who applied the word *drapetomania* to the malady of the American fugitive. Many negroes sought relief in a marooning life; but their number was not so great as we might expect. After two or three days' experience, hunger and exposure drove them back, if they were not caught before. The number of permanent maroons did not reach a thousand.

But a few tribes were so turbulent and sullen that the planter avoided buying them, unless his need of field-hands was very urgent. He was obliged to be circumspect, however; for the traders knew how to jockey a man with a sick, disabled, or impracticable negro. The Jews made a good business of buying refuse negroes and refurbishing them up for the market. The French traders thought it merit to deceive a Jew; but the latter feigned to be abjectly helpless, in order to enjoy this refitting branch of the business.

The Coromantine negroes were especial objects of suspicion, on account of their quarrelsome and incendiary temper. Such powerful and capable men ought to have valued more highly the privileges of their position; but they could never quite conquer their prejudices, and were continually interpreting the excellent constitutional motto, *Vera pro gratis*, into, *Liberty instead of sugar!* An English physician of the last century, James Grainger by name, wrote a poem in four books upon the "Sugar-Cane," published in 1764. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that he exhibited a dose; but the production yields the following lines

which show that the Coromantine of Jamaica was no better than his brother of San Domingo:—

"Yet, if thine own, thy children's life, be dear,  
Buy not a Cormantee, though healthy, young,  
Of breed too generous for the servile field:  
They, born to freedom in their native land,  
Choose death before dishonorable bonds;  
Or, fired with vengeance, at the midnight hour  
Sudden they seize thine unsuspecting watch,  
And thine own poniard bury in thy breast."

All these kinds of negroes, and many others whom it would be tedious to mention, differing in intelligence and capability, were alike in the vividness of their Fetich-worship and the feebleness of their spiritual sentiments.<sup>9</sup> They brought over the local superstitions, the grotesque or revolting habits, the twilight exaggerations of their great pagan fatherland, into a practical

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<sup>9</sup> Sometimes Fetichism furnished a legend which Catholicism, in its best estate, would not despise. Here is one that belongs to the Akwapim country, which lies north of Akkra, and is tributary to Ashantee. "They say that Odomañkama created all things. He created the earth, the trees, stones, and men. He showed men what they ought to eat, and also said to them, 'Whenever anybody does anything that is lovely, think about it, and do it also, only do not let your eye grow red' (that is, inflamed, lustful). When He had finished the creation. He left men and went to heaven; and when He went, the Fetiches came hither from the mountains and the sea. Now, touching these Fetiches, as well as departed spirits, they are not God, neither created by God, but He has only given them permission, at their request, to come to men. For which reason no Fetich ever receives permission to slay a man, except directly from the Creator."—Petermann's *Mittheilungen*, 1856, p. 466.

paganism, which struck at their rights, and violated their natural affections, with no more pretence of religious than of temporal consolation, and only capable of substituting one Fetich for another. The delighted negroes went to mass as to their favorite *Calenda*; the tawdry garments and detestable drone of the priest, whose only Catholicism was his indiscriminate viciousness, appeared to them a superior sorcery; the Host was a great *Gree-gree*; the muttered liturgy was a palaver with the spirits; music, incense, and gilding charmed them for a while away from the barbarous ritual of their midnight serpent-worship. The priests were white men, for the negroes thought that black baptism would not stick; but they were fortune-hunters, like the rest of the colony, mere agents of the official will, and seekers of their pleasures in the huts of the negro-quarter.<sup>10</sup> The curates declared that the innate stupidity of the African baffled all their efforts to instil a truth or rectify an error. The secret practice of serpent-worship was punishable, as the stolen gatherings for dancing were, because it unfitted them for the next day's toil, and excited notions of vengeance in their minds. But the curates declined the trouble of teaching them the difference in spiritual association between the wafer in a box and the snake in a hamper. On the whole, the negro loved to thump his sheepskin drum, and work himself up to the frantic climax of a barbarous chant, better than to hear the noises in a church. He admired the pomp, but

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<sup>10</sup> *Droit Public des Colonies Françaises, d'après les Lois faites pour ces Pays*, Tom. I. p. 306.

was continually stealing away to renew the shadowy recollection of some heathen rite. What elevating influence could there be in the Colonial Church for these children of Nature, who were annually reinforcing Church and Colony at a frightful pace with heathenism? Twenty or thirty tribes of pagans were imported at the rate of twenty thousand living heads per annum, turned loose and mixed together, with a sense of original wrong and continual cruelty rankling amid their crude and wild emotions, and prized especially for their alleged deficiency of soul, and animal ability to perform unwholesome labor. Slavery never wore so black a face. The only refining element was the admixture of superior tribes, a piece of good-fortune for the colony, which the planter endeavored as far as possible to miss by distributing the fresh cargoes according to their native characters. A fresh Eboe was put under the tutelage of a naturalized Eboe, a Jolof with a Jolof, and so on: their depressed and unhealthy condition upon landing, and their ignorance of the Creole dialect, rendered this expedient.<sup>11</sup>

But these distinctions could not be preserved upon such a

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<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, an elaborate *Manuel des Habitans de St. Domingue* cautions the planters on this point: "Carefully avoid abandoning the new negroes to the discretion of the old ones, who are often very glad to play the part of hosts for the sake of such valets, to whom they make over the rudest part of their day's work. This produces disgust and repugnance in the new-comers, who cannot yet bear to be ordered about, least of all to be maltreated by negroes like themselves, while, on the contrary, they submit willingly and with affection to the orders of a white." This Manual, which reads like a treatise on muck or the breeding of cattle, proceeds to say, that, if the planter would preserve his negroes' usefulness, he must be careful to keep off the ticks.

limited area and amid these jostling tribes. People of a dozen latitudes swarmed in the cabins of a single negro-quarter. Even the small planter could not stock his habitation with a single kind of negro: the competition at each trade-sale of slaves prevented it. So did a practice of selling them by the scramble. This was to shut two or three hundred of them into a large court-yard, where they were all marked at the same price, and the gates thrown open to purchasers. A greedy crowd rushed in, with yells and fighting, each man struggling to procure a quota, by striking them with his fists, tying handkerchiefs or pieces of string to them, fastening tags around their necks, regardless of tribe, family, or condition. The negroes, not yet recovered from their melancholy voyage, were amazed and panic-stricken at this horrible onslaught of avaricious men; they frequently scaled the walls, and ran frantically up and down the town.

As soon as the slaves were procured, by sale on shipboard, by auction, or by scramble, they received the private marks of their owners. Each planter had a silver plate, perforated with his letter, figure, or cipher, which he used to designate his own slaves by branding. If two planters happened to be using the same mark, the brand was placed upon different spots of the body. The heated plate, with an interposing piece of oiled or waxed paper, was touched lightly to the body; the flesh swelled, and the form of the brand could never be obliterated. Many slaves passed from one plantation to another, being sold and resold, till their bodies were as thick with marks as an obelisk. How different

from the symbols of care in the furrowed face and stooping form of a free laborer, where the history of a humble home, planted in marriage and nursed by independent sorrow, is printed by the hand of God!

By this fusion of native races a Creole nation of slaves was slowly formed and maintained. The old qualities were not lost, but new qualities resulted from the new conditions. The *bozal* negro was easily to be distinguished from the Creole. *Bozal* is from the Spanish, meaning *muzzled*, that is, ignorant of the Creole language and not able to talk.<sup>12</sup> Creole French was created by the negroes, who put into it very few words of their native dialects, but something of the native construction, and certain euphonic peculiarities. It is interesting to trace their love of alliteration and a concord of sounds in this mongrel French, which became a new colonial language. The bright and sparkling French appears as if submitted to great heat and just on the point of running together. There is a great family of African dialects in which a principal sound, or the chief sound of a leading word, appears in all the words of a sentence, from no grammatical reason at all, but to satisfy a sweetish ear. It is like the charming gabble of children, who love to follow the first key that the tongue strikes. Mr. Grout<sup>13</sup> and other missionaries note examples of this: *Abantu bake bonke abakoluayo ba hlala ba de ba be ba quedile*, is

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<sup>12</sup> In Cuba, the slave who had lived upon the island long enough to learn the language was called *Ladino*, "versed in an idiom."

<sup>13</sup> *American Oriental Society*, Vol. I. p. 423, *et seq.*

a sentence to illustrate this native disposition. The alliteration is sometimes obscured by elisions and contractions, but never quite disappears. Mr. Grout says: "So strong is the influence of this inclination to concord produced by the repetition of initials, that it controls the distinction of number, and quite subordinates that of gender, and tends to mould the pronoun after the likeness of the initial element of the noun to which it refers; as, *Izintombi zake zi ya hamba*, "The daughters of him they do walk." These characteristics appear in the formation of the Creole French, in connection with another childlike habit of the negro, who loves to put himself in the objective case, and to say *me* instead of *I*, as if he knew that he had to be a chattel.

The article *un, une*, could not have been pronounced by a negro. It became in his mouth *nion*. The personal pronouns *je, tu, il*, were converted into *mo, to, ly*, and the possessive *mon, ton, son* into *à moue, à toue, à ly*, and were placed after the noun, which negro dialects generally start their sentences with. Possessive pronouns had the unmeaning syllable *quien* before them, as, *Nous gagné quien à nous*, for *Nous avons les nôtres*; and demonstrative pronouns were changed in this way: *Mo voir z'animaux là yo*, for *J'ai vu ces animaux*, and *Ci la yo qui té vivre*, for *Ceux qui ont vécu*. A few more examples will suffice to make other changes clear. A negro was asked to lend his horse; he replied, *Mouchée* (Monsieur), *mo pas gagné choual, mais mo connais qui gagné ly; si ly pas gagné ly, ly faut mo gagné ly, pour vous gagné*: "Massa, me no got horse, but me know who got um; if him no got um,

him get me um for you." *Quelquechose* becomes *quichou*; *zozo* = *oiseau*; *gourneé* = *combattre*; *gueté* = *voir*; *zombi* = *revenant*; *bougé* = *demeurer*; *helé* = *appeler*, etc.<sup>14</sup>

The dialect thus formed by the aid of traits common to many negro tribes was a solution into which their differences fell to become modified; when the barriers of language were broken down, the common African nature, with all its good and evil, appeared in a Creole form. The forced labor, the caprice of masters, and the cruel supervision of the overseers engendered petty vices of theft, concealment, and hypocrisy. The slave became meaner than the native African in all respects; even his passions lost their extravagant sincerity, but part of the manliness went with it. Intelligence, ability, adroitness were exercised in a languid way; rude and impetuous tribes became more docile and manageable, but those who were already disposed to obedience did not find either motive or influence to lift their natures into a higher life. An average slave-character, not difficult to govern, but without instinct to improve, filled the

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<sup>14</sup> Harvey's *Sketches of Haiti*, p. 292. See a vocabulary in *Manuel des Habitans de St. Domingue*, par L.J. Ducoeurjoly, Tom. II. Here is a verse of a Creole song, written in imitation of the negro dialect:— *Dipi mo perdi Lisette, Mo pas souchié Calinda,\* Mo quitté bram-bram sonette, Mo pas batte bamboula.\*\* Quand mo contré l'aut' negresse, Mo pas gagné z'yeu pour ly; Mo pas souchié travail piece, Tou qui chose a moué mouri.\* A favorite dance. \*\* A kind of tambourine or drum made of a keg stretched with skins, and sometimes hung with bells.] The French of which is as follows:— *Mes pas, loin de ma Lisette, S'éloignent du Calinda; Et ma ceinture à sonnette Languit sur mon bamboula. Mon oeil de toute autre belle N'aperçoit plus le souris; Le travail en vain m'appelle, Mes sens sont anéantis.**

colony. A colonist would hardly suspect the fiery Africa whose sun ripened the ancestors of his slaves, unless he caught them by accident in the midst of their voluptuous *Calenda*, or watched behind some tree the midnight orgy of magic and Fetichism. A slave-climate gnawed at the bold edges of their characters and wore them down, as the weather rusted out more rapidly than anywhere else all the iron tools and implements of the colony. The gentler traits of the African character, mirth and jollity, affectionateness, domestic love, regard and even reverence for considerate masters, were the least impaired; for these, with a powerful religiosity, are indigenous, like the baobab and palm, and give a great accent to the name of Africa. What other safeguard had a planter with his wife and children, who lived with thirty slaves or more, up to six hundred, upon solitary plantations that were seldom visited by the *maréchaussée*, or rural police? The root of such a domination was less in the white man's superiority than in the docile ability of those who ought to have been his natural enemies. "*Totidem esse hostes quot servos*" said Seneca; but he was thinking of the Scythian and Germanic tribes. A North-American Indian, or a Carib, though less pagan than a native African, could never become so subdued. Marooning occurred every day, and cases of poisoning, perpetrated generally by Ardra negroes, who were addicted to serpent-worship, were not infrequent; but they poisoned a rival or an enemy of their own race as often as a white man. The "Affiches Américaines," which was published weekly at

Port-au-Prince, had always a column or two describing fugitive negroes; but local disturbances or insurrectionary attempts were very rare: a half-dozen cannot be counted since the Jolofo of Diego Columbus frightened Spaniards from the colony. If this be so in an island whose slaves were continually reinforced by native Africans, bringing Paganism to be confirmed by a corrupt Catholicism, where every influence was wanton and debased, and the plantation-cruelties, as we shall shortly see, outheroed everything that slave-holding annals can reveal, how much less likely is it that we shall find the slave insurrectionary in the United States, whence the slave-trade has been excluded for nearly two generations, and where the African, modified by climate, and by religious exercises of his own which are in harmony with his native disposition and enjoin him not to be of a stout mind, waits prayerfully till liberty shall be proclaimed! If the slaveholder ever lived in dread, it was not so much from what he expected as from what he knew that he deserved. But the African is more merciful than the conscience of a slaveholder. Blessed are these meek ones: they shall yet inherit earth in America!

France was always more humane than her colonies, for every rising sun did not rekindle there the dreadful paradox that sugar and sweetness were incompatible, and she could not taste the stinging lash as the crystals melted on her tongue.<sup>15</sup> An ocean

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<sup>15</sup> There was a proverb as redoubtably popular as Solomon's "Spare the rod"; it originated in Brazil, where the natives were easily humiliated:—"Regarder un sauvage

rolled between. She always endeavored to protect the slave by legislation; but the Custom of Paris, when it was gentle, was doubly distasteful to the men who knew how impracticable it was. Louis XIII. would not admit that a single slave lived in his dominions, till the priests convinced him that it was possible through the slave-trade to baptize the Ethiopian again. Louis XIV. issued the famous *Code Noir* in 1685, when the colonists had already begun to shoot a slave for a saucy gesture, and to hire buccaneers to hunt marooning negroes at ten dollars per head.<sup>16</sup>

The *Code Noir* was the basis of all the colonial legislation which affected the condition of the slave, and it is important to notice its principal articles. We have only room to present them reduced to their essential substance.

Negroes must be instructed in the Catholic religion, and *bozals* must be baptized within eight days after landing. All overseers must be Catholic. Sundays and *fête* days are days of rest for the negro; no sale of negroes or any other commodity can take place

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*de travers, c'est le battre; le battre, c'es le tuer: battre un nègre, c'est le nourrir*": Looking hard at a savage is beating him: beating is the death of him: but to beat a negro is bread and meat to him.

<sup>16</sup> A Commissioner's fee under the Fugitive-Slave Bill. History will repeat herself to emphasize the natural and inalienable rights of slave-catchers. In 1706 the planters organized a permanent force of maroon-hunters, twelve men to each quarter of the island, who received the annual stipend of three hundred livres. In addition to this, the owners paid thirty livres for each slave caught in the canes or roads, forty-five for each captured beyond the *mornes*, and sixty for those who escaped to more distant places. The hunters might fire at the slave, if he could not be otherwise stopped, and draw the same sums. In 1711 the maroons became so insolent that the planters held four regular chases or *battues* per annum.

on those days.

Free men who have children by slaves, and masters who permit the connection, are liable to a fine of two thousand pounds of sugar. If the guilty person be a master, his slave and her children are confiscated for the benefit of the hospital, and cannot be freed.

If a free man is not married to any white person during concubinage with his slave, and shall marry said slave, she and her children shall become enfranchised.

No consent of father and mother is essential for marriage between slaves, but no master can constrain slaves to marry against their will.

If a slave has a free black or colored woman for his wife, the male and female children shall follow the condition of the mother; and if a slave-woman has a free husband, the children shall follow his condition.

The weekly ration for a slave of ten years old and upwards consists of five Paris pints of manioc meal, or three cassava loaves, each weighing two and a half pounds, with two pounds of salt beef, or three of fish, or other things in proportion, but never any tafia<sup>17</sup> in the place of a ration; and no master can avoid giving a slave his ration by offering him a day for his own labor. Weaned children to the age of ten are entitled to half the above ration. Each slave must also have two suits of clothes yearly, or cloth in proportion.

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<sup>17</sup> A coarse rum distilled from the sugar-cane.

Slaves who are not properly nourished and clothed by their masters can lodge a complaint against them. If it be well-founded, the masters can be prosecuted without cost to the slave.

Slaves who are old, infirm, diseased, whether incurable or not, must be supported. If they are abandoned by masters, they are to be sent to the hospital, and the masters must pay six sols daily for their support.

A slave's testimony can be received as a statement to serve the courts in procuring light elsewhere; but no judge can draw presumption, conjecture, or proof therefrom.

The slave who strikes his master or mistress, or their children, so as to draw blood, or in the face, may be punished even with death; and all excesses or offences committed by slaves against free persons shall be severely punished, even with death, if the case shall warrant.

Any free or enfranchised person who shall shelter a fugitive shall be fined three hundred pounds of sugar for each day.

A slave who is condemned to death shall be valued before execution, and the estimated price paid to the master, provided the latter has not made a pretended complaint.

Masters may chain and whip their slaves, but not mutilate, torture, or kill them.

If a master or overseer shall kill a slave, he shall be prosecuted; but if he can convince the court of cause, he may be discharged without pardon from the King.

Masters who are twenty years old can free their slaves at will or

by testamentary act, without being held to give a reason for it; and if a slave is named by testament a general legatee, or an executor, or guardian of children, he shall be considered enfranchised.

An enfranchised slave shall be regarded as free as any person born in France, without letters of naturalization; he can enjoy the advantages of natives everywhere, even if he was born in a foreign country.

An enfranchised slave must pay singular respect to his ancient master, his widow, and children; an injury done to them will be punished more severely than if done to others. But he is free, and quit of all service, charge, and tenure that may be pretended by his former master, either respecting his person or property and succession.

An enfranchised slave shall enjoy the same rights, privileges, and immunities as if he had been born free. The King desires that he may merit his acquired liberty, and that it may confer upon him, as well in his person as estate, the same effects which the blessing of natural liberty confers upon French subjects.

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