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AN ESSAY
ON
Liberty and Slavery.

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§ IV. The great benefit supposed by American abolitionists to result to the freed negroes from the British act of emancipation.

We have, in the preceding sections, abundantly seen that the freed colored subjects of the British crown are fast relapsing into the most irretrievable barbarism, while the once flourishing colonies themselves present the most appalling scenes of desolation and distress. Surely it is no wonder that the hurrahing of the English people has ceased. "At the present moment," says the London Times for December 1st, 1852, "if there is one thing in the world that the British public do not like to talk about, or even to think about, it is the condition of the race for whom this great effort was made." Not so with the abolitionists of this country. They still keep up the annual celebration of that great event, the act of emancipation, by which, in the language of one of their number, more than half a million of human beings were "turned from brutes into freemen!"

It is the freedom of the negro which they celebrate. Let us look, then, for a few moments, into the mysteries of this celebration, and see, if we may, the nature of the praises
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they pour forth in honor of freedom, and the kind of freedom on which they are so passionately bestowed.

We shall not quote from the more insane of the fraternity of abolitionists, for their wild, raving nonsense would, indeed, be unworthy of serious refutation. We shall simply notice the language of Dr. Channing, the scholar-like and the eloquent, though visionary, advocate of British emancipation. Even as early as 1842, in an address delivered on the anniversary of that event, he burst into the following strain of impassioned eulogy: "Emancipation works well, far better than could have been anticipated. To me it could hardly have worked otherwise than well. It banished slavery, that wrong and curse not to be borne. It gave freedom, the dear birthright of humanity; and had it done nothing more, I should have found in it cause for joy. Freedom, simple freedom, is 'in my estimation just, far prized above all price.' I do not stop to ask if the emancipated are better fed and clothed than formerly. They are free; and that one word contains a world of good,* unknown to the most pampered slave."

* The emphasis is ours.

23*
And again, he says, "Nature cries aloud for freedom as our proper good, our birthright and our end, and resents nothing so much as its loss."

In these high-sounding praises, which hold up personal freedom as "our proper good," as "our end," it is assumed that man was made for liberty, and not liberty for man. It is, indeed, one of the fundamental errors of the abolitionist to regard freedom as a great substantive good, or as in itself a blessing, and not merely as a relative good. It may be, and indeed often is, an unspeakable benefit, but then it is so only as a means to an end. The end of our existence, the proper good, is the improvement of our intellectual and moral powers, the perfecting of our rational and immortal natures. When freedom subserves this end, it is a good; when it defeats this end, it is an evil. Hence there may be a world of evil as well as a world of good in "this one word."

The wise man adapts the means to the end. It were the very height of folly to sacrifice the end to the means. No man gives personal freedom to his child because he deems it always and in all cases a good. His heart teaches him a better doctrine when the highest good of his
child is concerned. Should we not be permitted, then, to have something of the same feeling in regard to those whom Providence has placed under our care, especially since, having the passions of men, with only the intellects of children, they stand in utmost need of guidance and direction?

As it is their duty to labor, so the law which compels them to do so is not oppressive. It deprives them of the enjoyment of no right, unless, indeed, they may be supposed to have a right to violate their duty. Hence, in compelling the colored population of the South to work, the law does not deprive them of liberty, in the true sense of the word; that is, it does not deprive them of the enjoyment of any natural right. It merely requires them to perform a natural duty.

This cannot be denied. It has been, as we have shown, admitted both by Dr. Wayland and Dr. Channing.* But while the end is approved, the means are not liked. Few of the abolitionists are disposed to offer any substitute for our method. They are satisfied merely to pull down and destroy, without the least

* See pages 110 and 119.
thought or care in regard to consequences. Dr. Channing has, however, been pleased to propose another method, for securing the industry of the black and the prosperity of the State. Let us then, for a moment, look at this scheme.

The black man, says he, should not be owned. He should work, but not under the control of a master. His overseer should be appointed by the State, and be amenable to the State for the proper exercise of his authority. Now, if this learned and eloquent orator had only looked one inch beneath the surface of his own scheme, he would have seen that it is fraught with the most insuperable difficulties, and that its execution must needs be attended with the most ruinous consequences.

Emancipate the blacks, then, and let the State undertake to work them. In the first place, we must ignore every principle of political economy, and consent to the wildest and most reckless of experiments, ere we can agree that the State should superintend and carry on the agricultural interest of the country. But suppose this difficulty out of the way, on what land would the State cause its slaves to be worked? It would scarcely take possession of
the plantations now under improvement; and, setting aside the owners, proceed to cultivate the land. But it must either do this, or else leave these plantations to become worthless for the want of laborers, and open new ones for the benefit of the State! In no point of view could a more utterly chimerical or foolish scheme be well conceived. If we may not be allowed to adhere to our own plan, we beg that some substitute may be proposed which is not fraught with such inevitable destruction to the whole South. Otherwise, we shall fear that these self-styled friends of humanity are more bent on carrying out their own designs than they are on promoting our good.

But what is meant by the freedom of the emancipated slaves, on which so many exalted eulogies have been pronounced? Its first element, it is plain, is a freedom from labor*—freedom from the very first law of nature. In one word, its sum and substance is a power on the part of the freed black to act pretty much as he pleases. Now, before we expend oceans of enthusiasm on such a freedom, would it not be well to see how he would be pleased to act?

* See chap. i. § 2.
Dr. Channing has told us, we are aware, of the "indomitable love of liberty," which had been infused into the breast of "fierce barbarians" by their native wildnesses.* But we are no great admirers of a liberty which knows no law except its own will, and seeks no end except the gratification of passion.† Hence, we have no very great respect for the liberty of fierce barbarians. It would make a hell on earth. "My maxim," exclaims Dr. Channing, "is anything but slavery!" Even slavery, we cry, before a freedom such as his!

This kind of freedom, it should be remembered, was born in France and cradled in the revolution. May it never be forgotten that the "Friends of the Blacks" at Boston had their exact prototypes in "les Amis des Noirs" of Paris. Of this last society Robespierre was the ruling spirit, and Brissot the orator. By the dark machinations of the one,‡ and the fiery eloquence of the other, the French people—la grande nation—were induced, in 1791, to pro-

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* Works, vol. v. p. 63.  † See chap. i. § 2.
‡ We have in the above remark done Boston some injustice. For New York has furnished the Robespierre, and Massachusetts only the Brissot, of "les Amis des Noirs" in America.
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claim the principle of equality to and for the free blacks of St. Domingo. This beautiful island, then the brightest and most precious jewel in the crown of France, thus became the first of the West Indies in which the dreadful experiment of a forced equality was tried. The authors of that experiment were solemnly warned of the horrors into which it would inevitably plunge both the whites and the blacks of the island. Yet, firm and immovable as death, Robespierre sternly replied, then "Perish the colonies rather than sacrifice one iota of our principles!"* The magnificent colony of St. Domingo did not quite perish, it is true; but yet, as every one, except the philanthropic "Ami des Noirs" of the present day, still remembers with a thrill of horror, the entire white population soon melted, like successive flakes of snow, in the furnace of that freedom which a Robespierre had kindled.

The atrocities of this awful massacre have had, as the historian has said,† no parallel in the

* This reply is sometimes attributed to Robespierre and sometimes to Brissot; it is probable that in substance it was made by both of these bloody compeers in the cause of abolitionism.

annals of human crime. "The negroes," says Alison, "marched with spiked infants on their spears instead of colors; they sawed asunder the male prisoners, and violated the females on the dead bodies of their husbands." The work of death, thus completed with such outbursts of unutterable brutality, constituted and closed the first act in the grand drama of Haytian freedom.

But equality was not yet established. The colored men, or mulattoes, beheld, with an eye burning with jealousy, the superior power and ascendancy of the blacks. Hence arose the horrors of a civil war. Equality had been proclaimed, and anarchy produced. In this frightful chaos, the ambitious mulattoes, whose insatiable desire of equality had first disturbed the peace of the island, perished miserably beneath the vengeance of the very slaves whom they had themselves roused from subjection and elevated into irresistible power. Thus ended the second act of the horrible drama.

This bloody discord, this wild chaos of disgusting brutalities, of course terminated not in freedom, but in a military despotism. With the subsequent wars and fearful destruction of human life our present inquiry has nothing to
do. We must confine our attention to the point before us, namely, the kind of freedom achieved by the blacks of St. Domingo. We have witnessed the two great manifestations of that freedom; we shall now look at its closing scene. This we shall, for obvious reasons, present in the language of an English author.

"An independent negro state," says he, "was thus established in Hayti; but the people have not derived all the benefits which they sanguinely expected. Released from their compulsory toil, they have not yet learned to subject themselves to the restraints of regular industry. The first absolute rulers made the most extraordinary efforts to overcome the indolence which soon began to display itself. The *Code Rural* directed that the laborer should fix himself on a certain estate, which he was never afterward to quit without a passport from the government. His hours of labor and rest were fixed by statute. The whip, at first permitted, was ultimately prohibited; but as every military officer was allowed to chastise with a thick cane, and almost every proprietor held a commission, the laborer was not much relieved. By these means Mr. Mackenzie supposes that the produce of 1806 was raised to
about a third of that of 1789. But such violent regulations could not continue to be enforced amid the succeeding agitations, and under a republican régime. Almost all traces of laborious culture were soon obliterated; large tracts, which had been one entire sugar garden, presented now only a few scattered plantations.*

Thus the lands were divided out among the officers of the army, while the privates were compelled to cultivate the soil under their former military commanders, clothed with more than "a little brief authority." No better could have been expected except by fools or fanatics. The blacks might preach equality, it is true, but yet, like the more enlightened ruffians of Paris, they would of course take good care not to practise what they had preached. Hence, by all the horrors of their bloody revolution, they only effected a change of masters. The white man had disappeared, and the black man, one of their own race and color, had assumed his place and his authority. And of all masters, it is well known, the naturally servile are the most cruel. "The earth," says Solo-

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mon, "cannot bear a servant when he reigneth."

"The sensual and the dark rebel in vain:
Slaves by their own compulsion, in mad game
They burst their manacles, to wear the name
Of Freedom, graven on a heavier chain."

COLE RIDGE.

Thus "the world of good" they sought was found, most literally, in "the word;" for the word, the name of freedom, was all they had achieved—at least of good. Poverty, want, disease, and crime, were the substantial fruits of their boasted freedom.

In 1789, the sugar exported was 672,000,000 pounds; in 1806, it was 47,516,531 pounds; in 1825, it was 2020 pounds; in 1832, it was 0 pounds. If history had not spoken, we might have safely inferred, from this astounding decline of industry, that the morals of the people had suffered a fearful deterioration. But we are not left to inference. We are informed, by the best authorities,† that their "morals are exceedingly bad;" and that under the reign of

* Prov. xxx. 22.
liberty, as it is called, their condition has, in all respects, become far worse than it was before. "There appears every reason to apprehend," says James Franklin, "that it will recede into irrecoverable insignificance, poverty, and disorder."*

Mr. T. Babington Macaulay has, we are aware, put forth certain notions on the subject of liberty, which are exactly in accordance with the views and the spirit of the abolitionists, as well as with the cut-throat philosophy of the Parisian philanthropists of the revolution. As these notions are found in one of his juvenile productions, and illustrated by "a pretty story" out of Ariosto, we should not deem it worth while to notice them, if they had not been retained in the latest edition of his Miscellanies. But for this circumstance, we should pass them by as the rhetorical flourish of a young man who, in his most mature productions, is often more brilliant than profound.

"Ariosto," says he, "tells a pretty story of a fairy, who, by some mysterious law of her nature, was condemned to appear at certain seasons in the form of a foul and poisonous snake.

* Franklin's Present State of Hayti, &c., p. 265.
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Those who injured her during the period of her disguise were forever excluded from participation in the blessings which she bestowed. But to those who, in spite of her loathsome aspect, pitied and protected her, she afterward revealed herself in the beautiful and celestial form which was natural to her, accompanied their steps, granted all their wishes, filled their houses with wealth, made them happy in love, and victorious in war. Such a spirit is Liberty. At times she takes the form of a hateful reptile. She grovels, she hisses, she stings. But wo to those who in disgust shall venture to crush her! And happy are those who, having dared to receive her in her degraded and frightful shape, shall at length be rewarded by her in the time of her beauty and her glory."

For aught we know, all this may be very fine poetry, and may deserve the place which it has found in some of our books on rhetoric. But yet this beautiful passage will—like the fairy whose charms it celebrates—be so surely transformed into a hateful snake or venomous toad, that it should not be swallowed without an antidote. Robespierre, Danton, Marat, Barrère, and the black Dessalines, took this hateful, hissing, stinging, maddening reptile to their bosoms,
and they are welcome to its rewards. But they
mistook the thing: it was not liberty trans-
formed; it was tyranny unbound, the very
scourge of hell, and Satan's chief instrument
of torture to a guilty world. It was neither
more nor less than Sin, despising God, and war-
ring against his image on the earth.

We do not doubt—nay, we firmly believe—
that in the veritable history of the universe, analo-
gous changes have taken place. But then these
awful changes were not mere fairy tales. They
are recorded in the word of God. When Luci-
fer, the great bearer of light, himself was free,
he sought equality with God, and thence be-
came a hateful, hissing serpent in the dust.
But he was not fully cursed, until "by devilish
art" he reached "the organs of man's fancy,"
and with them forged the grand illusion that
equality alone is freedom.

For even sinless, happy Eve was made to feel
herself oppressed, until, with keen desire of
equality with gods, "forth reaching to the fruit,
she plucked, she ate:"—

"Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of wo,
That all was lost."
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How much easier, then, to effect the ruin of poor, fallen man, by stirring up this fierce desire of equality with discontented thoughts and vain hopes of unattainable good! It is this dark desire, and not liberty, which, in its rage, becomes the "poisonous snake;" and, though decked in fine, allegoric, glowing garb, it is still the loathsome thing, the "false worm," that turned God's Paradise itself into a blighted world.

If Mr. Macaulay had only distinguished between liberty and license, than which no two things in the universe are more diametrically opposed to each other, his passion for fine rhetoric would not have betrayed him into so absurd a conceit respecting the diverse forms of freedom. Liberty is—as we have seen—the bright emanation of reason in the form of law; license is the triumph of blind passion over all law and order. Hence, if we would have liberty, the great deep of human passion must be restrained. For this purpose, as Mr. Burke has said, there must be power somewhere; and if there be not moral power within, there must be physical power without. Otherwise, the restraints will be too weak; the safeguards of liberty will give way, and the passions of men
will burst into anarchy, the most frightful of all the forms of tyranny. Shall we call this liberty? Shall we seek the secure enjoyment of natural rights in a wild reign of lawless terror? As well might we seek the pure light of heaven in the bottomless pit. It is, indeed, a most horrible desecration of the sacred name of liberty, to apply it either to the butcheries and brutalities of the French Revolution, or to the more diabolical massacres of St. Domingo. If such were freedom, it would, in sober truth, be more fitly symbolized by ten thousand hissing serpents than by a single poisonous snake; and by all on earth, as in heaven, it should be abhorred. Hence, those pretended friends and advocates of freedom, who would thus fain transmute her form divine into such horribly distorted shapes, are with her enemies confederate in dark misguided league.

§ V. The consequences of abolition to the South.

 "We have had experience enough in our own colonies," says the Prospective Review, for November, 1852, "not to wish to see the experiment tried elsewhere on a larger scale." Now this, though it comes to us from across the Atlantic, really sounds like the voice of genuine