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Содержание

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EMANCIPATION IN JAMAICA

The luminous summary of statistical facts published in the March number of the *Atlantic Monthly* for 1862, has, in a few pages, conclusively settled the question whether emancipation in the smaller islands of the British West Indies has been a success or a failure. It applies the standard of financial results, which, though the lowest, is undoubtedly the best; for the defenders of slavery would hardly choose its moral advantages as their strong position, and if its alleged economical advantages turn out also an illusion, there is not much to be said for it. Indeed, of late they have been growing shy of the smaller islands, which furnish too many weapons for the other side, and too few for their own; and have chosen rather to divert attention from these by triumphant clamors about the forlorn condition of Jamaica. This magnificent island, once the fairest possession of the British crown, now almost a wilderness, has been the burden of their lamentations over the fatal workings of emancipation. And truly if emancipation has really done so much mischief in Jamaica as they claim, it is a most damaging fact. Testimony of opposite results in the smaller islands would hardly countervail it. Such testimony would be good to prove that the freedom of the negro works well in densely peopled insular communities, where the pressure of population compels industry. The opponents of emancipation are willing sometimes to acknowledge that where the laboring population are, as they say, in virtual slavery to the planters, by the impossibility of obtaining land of their own, their release from the degradation of being personally owned may act favorably upon them. But they maintain that where the negro can easily escape from the control of the planter, as in Jamaica, where plenty of land is obtainable at low rates, his innate laziness is there invincible. This very representation I remember to have seen a few years ago in a Jamaica journal in the planting interest, which maintained that unless the negroes of that island were also reduced to 'virtual slavery'—using those very words—by an immense importation of foreign laborers, it would be impossible to bring them to reasonable terms.

Now the condition of the South is like that of Jamaica, not like that of the smaller islands. Were the Southern negroes emancipated, and should they desert the plantations in a body, it is not likely that they would starve. They could at least support themselves as well as the white sandhillers, and probably better, considering their previous habits of work. Besides, as in Jamaica, there would of course be many small proprietors, who would be ruined by emancipation or before it, and from whom the negroes could easily procure the few acres apiece that would be required by the wants of their rude existence. Jamaica, then, is far nearer a parallel to the South than most of the smaller islands, and for this reason an inquiry into the true workings of emancipation there is of prime interest and importance.

The writer is very far indeed from pretending to have carried through such an inquiry. His personal acquaintance extends to but seven of the twenty-two parishes of the island, and he is intimately acquainted with not more than three of those seven. He has but a meagre knowledge of statistical facts, bearing on the workings of emancipation in the island, and indeed the statistics themselves, as Mr. Sewell complains, are very meagre and very hard to get. Still the writer has been able to gather some facts which will speak for themselves, and he claims for his personal impressions on points concerning which he cannot give particular facts the degree of confidence deserved by one who has resided five years and a half in a rural district, who has lived familiarly conversant with negroes and with whites of all classes, who has heard all sides of the question from valued personal

friends, and who neither carried to Jamaica nor brought away from it any peculiar disposition to an apotheosis of the negro character.

There is, however, an excess of candor affected by some writers on this question, which is neither honorable to them nor wholesome to their readers. They would have us believe that they began their inquiries entirely undecided whether slavery or freedom is the normal condition of the African race, and that their conclusions, whatever they are, have been purely deduced from the facts that they have gathered. The writer lays claim to no such comprehensive indifference. He would as soon think of suspending his faith in Christ until he could resolve all the difficulties of the first of Genesis, as of suspending his moral judgment respecting the system which makes one man the brute instrument of another's gain, till he knew just how the statistics of sugar and coffee stand. Woe unto us if the fundamental principles which govern human relations have themselves no better foundation than the fluctuating figures of blue-books!

But if freedom is better than slavery, she will be sure to vindicate her superiority in due time, and is little beholden to overzealous friends who cannot be content meanwhile that present facts shall tell their own story, whatever it be. There is much, very much, in the present condition of Jamaica, to cause an honest man to think twice before setting it down as testifying favorably for emancipation, or before dismissing it as not testifying unfavorably against it.

And first, all rose-colored accounts of the Jamaica negro may be summarily dismissed. He is not a proficient in industry, economy, intelligence, morality, or religion, but, though rising, is yet far down on the scale in all these respects. Nor is it true that all his peculiar vices are to be referred to slavery. The sensuality, avarice, cunning, and litigiousness of the Creole[1] negro correspond exactly with Du Chaillu's and Livingstone's descriptions of the native African.[2] But on the other hand, the accounts of these travellers bear witness to a freshness and independence of spirit in the native African, which has been crushed out of the enslaved negro. Several missionaries have gone from Jamaica to Africa, and they speak with delight of the manliness and vigor of character which they find among the blacks there, as contrasted with the abjectness of those who have been oppressed by slavery and infected with its sly and cringing vices. Although the faults of the negro, except this servile abjectness, may not have been created by slavery, yet slavery and heathenism are so identical in character and tendency that there is scarcely a heathen vice, and, as we have found of late to our sorrow, scarcely a heathen cruelty, which slavery would not create if it did not exist, and of course scarcely one already existing which it does not foster and intensify. The unsocial selfishness of the emancipated black man, his untrustworthiness and want of confidence in others, are traits that his race may have brought with it from Africa, but they have been nourished by slavery, until it seems almost impossible to eradicate them. I am happy to say, however, that the young people who have been subjected to the best influences, exhibit already the virtues of public spirit and faithfulness to a very gratifying degree. The trouble is that they are a minority of the whole. And until the character of the negroes can be so elevated as to bring them to put some confidence in one another, they may improve in individual industry, as they manifestly are improving, but the benefits resulting from combined action can be enjoyed only in a very limited measure. Even now two black men can hardly own so much as a small sugar mill in common. They are almost sure to quarrel over the division of the profits. The consequence is, that, whereas they might have neighborhood mills and sugar works of the best quality at much less expense, now, where the small settlers raise the cane, each man must have his little mill and boilers to himself, at all the extra cost of money and labor that it occasions. And so of savings banks and associations for procuring medical aid, and a thousand other objects of public utility, without which a people must remain in the rudest state. Fortunately, however, the

[1] Negro of West Indian birth. Creole, used alone, signifies a West Indian white.

[2] However, I should say that there are portions of Western Africa where trustworthy accounts give to the negroes a widely different and far more favorable character.

negro is strongly disposed to worship, and the church, that society out of which a thousand other societies have sprung, has a strong hold upon him. Under the shelter of that, many other beneficent associations will doubtless grow up.

But if rose-colored accounts of the freed negro are to be dismissed unceremoniously, on the other hand, the malignant representations which Mr. Carlyle seems to find such a relish in believing deserve to be branded as both false and wicked. His mythical negro, up to the ears in 'pumpkin,' working half an hour a day, and not to be tempted by love or money to work more, would have been, during my whole residence in the island, as great a curiosity to me as an ornithorhynchus. Doubtless something approaching to the phenomenon can be found; for a young Scotchman, a friend of mine, who was appointed to take the census of a secluded district, came to me after visiting it, and gave me an account of the people he had found in the bush, answering pretty nearly to Mr. Carlyle's description. But though he had been in the island from a boy, he spoke of it with something of the surprise attending a new discovery. I should state, however, that my residence was in a district mostly occupied by small freeholders, and containing but few estates. In planting districts the number of worthless, idle negroes is much larger. I have been assured that the negroes of the parish of Vere are peculiarly so. The men, I have been told, do scarcely any work, except in crop time; the women do none at all, not even to keep their houses neat. There is scarcely a cottage in the parish that has a bread-fruit or a cocoanut tree on its ground.[3] Everything is dirty and forlorn. On the other hand, in Metcalfe and the adjoining parts of St. Andrew, and St. Thomas in the Vale, although the mass of the working people have certainly not learned much about comfort yet, still the number of neat, floored, and glazed houses, the fruit trees on almost every negro plot, the neat hibiscus hedges, with their gay red flowers, surrounding even the poorer huts, the small cane fields and coffee pieces noticeable at every turn, and the absence of loungers about the cottages, go to make up a very different picture from what has been drawn of Vere. It is plain, then, that the impressions which travellers bring away with them from Jamaica will vary almost to entire opposition, according to the quarters they have visited. Now what is the cause of these glaring contrasts? The negro character is remarkably uniform. If there are great differences among them, every one that knows them will ascribe it to a difference in circumstances. What is the difference then between Metcalfe and Vere? Simply this: Metcalfe is the home of small freeholders; Vere is a sugar parish, where the estates are in prosperous activity. It has been less affected by emancipation than any other parish. In Metcalfe the negroes are independent; in Vere they are completely subject to the planters. It is said that not even an ounce of sugar is permitted to be sold in the parish. All is for exportation. If the writer then attempts to vindicate the character of the blacks from the reproaches of incurable laziness and unthriftiness that have been cast upon it, he wishes it to be understood that he speaks only for the freeholders, who have homes of their own, which they have an inducement to improve and beautify, and who have land of their own which no dishonest motive prompts them to neglect, and for the estate laborers whose condition most nearly resembles theirs. If the blacks on many plantations are little disposed to adorn homes from which they may be ejected at any time; if they are discouraged from the minor industries essential to comfort, lest these should interfere with the grosser labor required of them; if they are kept idle out of crop time for fear they should not be available in crop time; if their mental improvement is discouraged by the planter instinct, unchanged in nature though circumscribed in scope; if on many estates they are herded in barracks whose promiscuous life debases still lower their already low morality; if their labors are directed for absentee masters by hired overseers, whose interest is not to create a wholesome confidence between laborers and proprietors, but to get the most they can out of them during their own term of employment; if they are treated with the old slaveholding arrogance, embittered by the consciousness of a check; and if thereby the more self-respecting are driven off, and the more abject-spirited who remain are rendered still more abject: I

[3] Mr. Underhill's account, so far as it goes, corroborates this description.

submit it is not fair to argue from this class of semi-slaves to the character of those who are really free, who call no man master, who have a chance to be men if they will, unhampered except by the general depressing influences that will always work in a country where slavery has lately existed, and where the slaveholding class have still a predominant social and political influence. And it is to be noted that Carlyle's picture is drawn from the neighborhood of a plantation, and so are Trollope's. Mr. Trollope, it is true, takes all imaginable pains to write himself down an ass. By his own ostentatious confessions, the only intellectual comprehensiveness to which he can lay claim is an astonishingly comprehensive ignorance. In view of this, his sage discoursings upon grave questions of political and social economy have about as comical an effect as the moralizings of a harlequin. But he is a lively describer of what passes under his eyes, and his sketches of what he heard and saw among the planters and on the plantations are doubtless authentic. However, he did not visit the small settlers; and to take pains to inform himself of the condition of a class of the population which he was not among, except by catching up the dinner-table maledictions of his planting friends against the class which they hate most, as being least dependent on them, would be of course entirely contrary to his professed superficiality.

There are but two recent works of much value on emancipation in Jamaica—Underhill's and Sewell's. The work of Mr. Underhill, although, as a delegate of a missionary society which had much to do in bringing about emancipation, he might be supposed to have a strong party interest, is marked by an impartial caution which entitles it to great respect and confidence.[4]

As to Mr. Sewell's book, it is marvellous how he could obtain so clear an insight in so short a time into the true condition of things. The paucity of statistical facts, however, plagued him, as it does every writer on Jamaica; and while the delinquencies of the planters are patent and palpable, he could not appreciate so well as a resident the difficulties arising from the provoking treacherousness of the negro character.

It is known by most, who do not choose to remain conveniently ignorant, that though the ruin of Jamaican planting prosperity has been accelerated by emancipation, it had been steadily going on for more than a generation previous. In 1792 the Jamaica Assembly represented to Parliament that in the twenty years previous one hundred and seventy-seven estates had been sold for debt. In 1800, it is stated in the Hon. Richard Hill's interesting little book, 'Lights and Shadows of Jamaica History,' judgments had been recorded against estates in the island to the enormous amount of £33,000,000. In the five years before the slave trade was abolished in 1807, sixty-five estates had been given up. Against the abolition of the slave trade the Assembly made the most urgent remonstrances, representing that it would be impossible to keep up the supply of labor without it. In other words, the slaves were worked to death so rapidly that natural increase alone would not maintain their number. The result justified their prediction.[5] In 1804, it appears that there were eight hundred and fifty-nine sugar estates in operation in the island. In 1834 there were six hundred and forty-six. In 1854 there were three hundred and thirty. Thus it appears that in the thirty years previous to the abolition of slavery, one quarter of the estates in operation at the beginning of that term had been abandoned, and in the twenty years succeeding abolition one half of those remaining had been given up. It is certainly no wonder that so great a social shock as emancipation, coming upon a tottering fabric, hastened its fall. But the foregoing facts show that, in the language of Mr. Underhill, 'ruin has been the chronic condition of Jamaica ever since the beginning of the century.'

The distinguished historian of the island, Bryan Edwards, himself a planter, and opposed to the abolition of the slave trade, describes the sugar cultivation, even before the supply of labor from Africa was cut off, as precarious in the highest degree, a mere lottery, and often, he says, 'a millstone

[4] It will be understood that I speak only of his remarks upon the economical aspect of emancipation.

[5] Different estimates conflict as to numbers, though all agreeing in the fact of an extensive and steady decline. I have used a statement which appeared trustworthy.

around the neck of the unfortunate proprietor.' That this was from no invincible necessity, the uniform prosperity of numerous estates shows. But these estates are all conducted economically, while, on the other hand, reckless extravagance was the rule in the palmy days of the olden time, and has remained, even in humbler circumstances, an inborn trait of the Creole gentleman.

If this was so during the continuance of the slave trade, what could have been looked for when this means of obtaining labor was suddenly cut off? Sewell states the estimated supply of negroes from Africa necessary to make up the annual waste at ten thousand. When this ceased it was obvious that only such a complete revolution in the system of labor as should save the horrible waste of life could preserve the plantations from ruin and the island from depopulation. But though the waste of life was diminished, it still went on. Estate after estate had to be given up for want of hands, at the same time that a constant decrease in the price of sugar in London, amounting to fifty per cent between 1815 and 1835, made it less and less profitable to work the remaining ones, and thus the planters were going steadily to ruin and the negro population steadily to extinction, for almost a generation before emancipation. In a memorial of the planters to Parliament in 1831, three years before abolition, they declare that without Parliamentary aid they are doomed to hopeless ruin. Already, they say, hundreds of respectable persons had been reduced almost to beggary by the precarious condition of the planting interest. In this memorial they make no allusion to the anti-slavery agitations, which produced no serious effect in the colony till 1832. Indeed the West Indian interest had been a notorious mendicant of old, and as in time a large part of West Indian estates had come to be owned by the British aristocracy, this begging was not apt to be in vain. Could Creole thriftlessness have been abolished and the slave trade retained, the ruin of the estates might have been averted. But as human power was not adequate to the first, nor Christian conscience capable of the second, no course was left but to let planting prosperity go its own way to destruction, and endeavor at least to save the population of the island from extermination. This emancipation effected, and this was its work. If it hastened the ruin of an interest which not even Parliamentary subsidies and high protective duties could prop up without the horrors of the middle passage, its trespass was certainly a very venial one compared with its work of salvation. Undoubtedly the great transition from slavery to freedom might have been better managed had the planters, recognizing it as inevitable, concurred heartily in efforts to smoothe the passage. The emancipationists in Parliament had at first no thought of immediate or even of speedy abolition. They did not suppose it wise or humane. Their first efforts merely contemplated such ameliorations of the condition of the slaves as common decency and humanity would prompt. They brought the Imperial Government to propose to the slaveholding colonies the enactment of laws abolishing the flogging of females, mitigating punishments, allowing the slaves to testify in court in cases to which whites were parties, providing for their religious instruction, appointing guardians of their scanty rights, giving them one week day for themselves, and restricting arbitrary sales of slaves. Not one of the colonies would agree to a single one of these measures. That peculiar obstinacy which slaveholding dominion seems to engender, made them, as with us, bent on having all or nothing. All hopes of instituting a gradual preparation for freedom being thus defeated by the stubborn refusal of the slaveholders to concur, speedy emancipation became a necessity. But even yet the abolitionists had not learned that if slaves are to be set free from their masters, the more quickly they are put out of their hands the better. A muzzled wolf, appointed to keep sheep he would much rather eat, would make about as amiable a custodian as masters allowed to exercise a limited authority over bondmen whom they have hitherto always had at their own will, and know they are about to lose altogether. I think it is generally agreed that the few years of apprenticeship were more plague than profit to all parties, and made the alienation between proprietors and laborers still more complete. At the same time, as the hours of labor were limited to eight, and Saturday was secured to the apprentices for themselves, the negroes fell into a way of thinking that they could only work those eight hours anyhow, and must have an idle time on the Saturday; and this notion continued to foster indolence for a good while after they were their own masters. The short time, too, which the planters knew they

should have them at their control, naturally stimulated them to make the most of them meanwhile. One gentleman in Metcalfe, for instance, laid out a thousand acres of coffee on a newly enlarged property, and gave orders to transfer a gang of negroes from an estate of his some twelve miles distant. The negroes cling like oysters to their birthplace, and they flatly refused to leave their grounds and their friends. The master summoned policemen, and had them cruelly flogged till they consented to go. Apprenticeship was abolished two years earlier than he had reckoned on, and the laborers thus forcibly transferred left him then in a body, and the thousand acres of coffee went to ruin. Had some Trollope chanced then to be travelling through that quarter, and been entertained by the disappointed proprietor with all the noble bounteousness which distinguished him, we can easily imagine how this fact would have figured in his book, as a proof of unconquerable negro laziness.

It was peculiarly unfortunate for Jamaica at this juncture, that the estates were mostly managed by attorneys and overseers for absentee landlords. Middlemen, it is said, ruined Ireland, and it is certain that they have helped mightily to ruin Jamaica. If attorneys had been ever so honest, how could they be efficient, when one attorney had very commonly the charge of four, six, ten, or even fourteen estates? If he paid a hasty visit to each one once in two years he did well. And as to overseers, how could honesty be expected when common morality was not permitted? It was a rule, having almost the force of law, that an overseer, if he married, was at once dismissed.[6] Loose licentiousness and loose dishonesty are very apt to go hand in hand, and it is certain that they did in Jamaica. A saying still in use among the whites of the island illustrates the standard of integrity: 'Make me your executor, and I do not ask you to make me your heir.' No wonder that estates went down like a row of bricks, one after another, when they had such managers. Had Jamaica been occupied at the time of emancipation by a resident proprietary, it is not likely that even they could have so far overcome their despotic habits and contempt for the negro as to treat the laboring population with fairness, and what they value still more, with decent respect. But still less could it be expected of the overseers that they would exercise foresight and self-control enough to retain the good will of the blacks. They had all the feelings of slaveholders, aggravated by more direct contact with the slaves, while their interest only bound them to make the most out of the estates during their own term of employment, no matter if they took a course that would ruin them eventually. Besides, an overseer must have been often tempted to work on the fears of a proprietor, just after emancipation, to persuade him to sell the estate to him; and many a one would not hesitate to ruin the property to bring down its price to his own means, knowing that the sale of the land or its conversion to pasturage would reimburse him.

The various means by which the planters endeavored to keep the negroes on the estates are too well known to require detail. Summary ejectments of the refractory from their dwellings, destruction of their provision grounds, refusal to sell them land except at exorbitant prices, were all tried. But there is too much land in Jamaica, and too few people, to make this game successful. There were abundance of thrown-up estates, and especially of coffee properties in the mountains, whose owners were only too glad to sell land at reasonable rates, and so this policy of coercion simply wrought out an incurable alienation between a large part of the proprietors and a large part of the peasantry. It must not be supposed, however, that the tyranny was all on one side. If at emancipation there was an unprincipled strife on the part of the planters to get the better of the negroes, there was an equally unprincipled and far more adroitly managed strife on the part of the negroes to get the better of the planters. Long and close observation of the emancipated black has satisfied the writer beyond all doubt that laziness is not one of his prominent faults. Negligent, unthrifty, careless of time, and sufficiently disposed to take his ease, he undoubtedly is. But every year of freedom has shown an advance, and the five years and a half of the writer's residence showed so unmistakable an advance in regular industry, carefulness of time, skill in laying out labor, and in the increase of the wants that stimulate industry, that his early misgivings as to the capacity and disposition of the freed negro to

[6] This was an absurd and wicked expedient for keeping him free from family interests.

take care of himself were finally put to rest. But a disposition to take care of himself and a disposition to be faithful to the interests of others are two very different things. At emancipation, the negroes' stimulants to making money were very strong. In the first impulse of their zeal they were everywhere erecting chapels and schools, raising large sums for the support of their ministers and schoolmasters; they were everywhere building houses, buying land, and laying the foundation of that settled well-being which time has continually made firmer. Then, too, money was plentiful, sugar bore a high price, and, notwithstanding the churlishness of many planters, more, perhaps, were eager to retain their hands by offering the highest possible wages, and even higher in many cases than the estates would bear. Nor were the blacks at all averse to making money. But though the Jamaica negro does not object to work, he dearly loves to cheat. The keenest Yankee that ever skinned a flint, cannot approach him in trickiness. This native trait has been sharpened to the utmost by the experience of slavery, which left him with the profound conviction that 'Buckra'[7] was fair plunder. The poor fellow could not be very severely blamed for thinking thus, for certainly he had been fair plunder for Buckra from time immemorial. Accordingly, the first few years after emancipation appear on many estates to have been passed in a continual struggle on the part of the negroes to see how much they could get out of the planters and how little they could give in return. They knew they had the whip hand of massa, and they were not slow to profit by the knowledge. They would saunter to their work at eight or nine o'clock in the morning, dawdle through it with intensely provoking unfaithfulness till three or four in the afternoon, and then would raise a prodigious uproar if they were not paid as liberally as if they had done an honest day's work. The poor planter meanwhile was at his wits' end. It was of no use to turn them off and hire another set, for, like the fox in the fable, he knew he should only fare the worse. If the estate was large enough to stand the strain for two or three years, and the manager was a man of self-control enough to keep his temper, and firmness enough to persevere in a winnowing of the whole region round about, treating them meanwhile with decency, and paying them honestly and promptly, he would at last be able to get a set of trusty hands, and give all the negroes of the neighborhood such an understanding of him that they would be ready, if they went to work for him, to leave off cheating, and honestly earn their wages. A friend of mine took an abandoned estate in 1854, and though for two or three years he was tortured like a bear at a stake, he succeeded at last, by the most scrupulous fairness on his own part, and by not tolerating the least dishonesty in a hand, in creating such a public sentiment among his laborers, that for their own credit they would themselves expose the dishonesty of a comrade. Now, he has as many laborers, and profitable ones, as he needs. But how many planters could be expected to have the principle or patience to carry out such a course of discipline? The ruin of the estates, or rather the acceleration of their inevitable ruin, is justly attributed, in large measure, to the planters, to their imperious bearing toward the enfranchised blacks, to their harsh expedients for keeping in dependence the large and much the best class of blacks, who wanted to become freeholders, to the slackness and unfaithfulness with which the wages of the people were often paid, to the debasing influences of the plantation, which drove off the more self-respecting, and to the waste, dishonesty, and shortsightedness inevitable in the management of several hundred estates mainly by middlemen. But on the other hand, it is not to be forgotten that the African barbarian, brought a heathen from home, and plunged into the deeper darkness of a compulsory heathenism, rigorously secluded by jealous cupidity from every ray of intellectual, and, so far as possible, of spiritual light, liable to cruel punishment if he snatched a few hours from his rest or his leisure to listen to the missionary, from whom alone he heard words of heavenly comfort or of human sympathy, condemned to a lifetime of unrequited labor—it must not be forgotten that he could not fail to come out from this school of supreme dishonesty with its lessons so deeply imprinted on his mind that not one generation or two would eradicate them, and that of all others he would be most inclined to practise them upon the white man, whom, having always known

[7] This African epithet for the whites is said, in the original, to bear the complimentary signification of 'devil.'

as a plunderer, he was only too glad to have an opportunity to plunder in return. Had Jamaica been occupied by a resident proprietary, attached by hereditary affection and pride to the soil, elevated by family sanctities, connected by something like kindly ties with their bondmen, and regarded by these in turn with something of affectionate fealty, in that case, although it is not likely that the ruin of the plantations could have been averted, it might have been delayed and mitigated. Mr. Underhill indeed goes further, and quotes the testimony of an overseer in the west of the island, that he knew of no estate managed, since emancipation, by a resident owner, which had not continued profitable. But a class of hirelings, debased in morals by the cruel selfishness of their employers, tempted almost irresistibly to unfaithfulness by the five thousand miles of ocean between them and their principals, and to recklessness and tyranny by the uncertain tenure of their places, and connected with the slaves by none but the grossest and most sordid ties—such management, in such a crisis, when the ties of old subjection were suddenly dissolved, and the negro stood independent, and knowing his independence, before his masters, would have ruined any country under the sun.

As to the present condition of the emancipated blacks, it is certain that the 7,340 freeholds which had been acquired in 1840, two years after emancipation, have considerably increased in number. I never heard of a negro freehold being given up,[8] while I did know of continual purchases of land by the blacks, either to make new holdings or to extend old ones.

The parish of Hanover is one in which happily the various classes are in a good degree united in feeling. The Hanover Society of Industry prepared a report about three years ago, quoted by Mr. Underhill, which shows that in that parish about seven eighths of the people are on holdings of their own, of which 891 consist of 1 acre, 431 of 2 acres, and 802 average 5-¼ acres each. Each family on an average consists of 4½ persons, and cultivates something over an acre, securing an income of about £28. Those who own land are five times as numerous as those who only hire it. The annual value of produce from the small holdings, estimated at £28 for each (£2 less than the society's estimate), is about £60,000. There are, besides, 29 estates having 3,675 acres under cultivation, and employing 2,760 laborers, of whom two thirds are females.[9] About one eighth of the population is at work upon them. These estates average 2,608 hogsheads of sugar, and 1,435 puncheons of rum. Of the whole area of the estates, 3,555 acres are in pasturage, and 28,552 acres inaccessible or ruinate. There are, besides, 151 small properties of 20 acres and upward. In six districts, comprising about one fourth of the parish, there were found 143 small cane mills, valued at £10 apiece, which turned out, in 1859, 455 barrels of sugar, worth about £900, to say nothing of the pork fattened on the refuse molasses. One district of the six, constituting the quarter of the parish examined, produced, in 1857, 146 barrels; in 1858, 227 barrels; in 1859, 261 barrels.

This is a pretty fair picture of what may be expected in parishes where the whites show some regard for the blacks; not very magnificent results, it is true, but showing the disposition of the people to procure land of their own, and their increasing disposition to add to the raising of provisions the cultivation of the great staple of the soil. The report of the Society of Industry bears the following testimony to their character: 'The peasantry are, generally speaking, industrious and well behaved, and are gradually becoming more comfortable in their worldly circumstances. In the town of Lucea there has been a decided increase in the amount of business within the last three years as compared with a number of years previously.' In Hanover, in 1845, there were 70 estates in operation. In 1860 there were only 29. The planters of this parish, however, do not lay the blame on the negroes, but attribute the decline to the mountainous character of the parish, which made it unprofitable to continue the estates after the great fall in the price of sugar.

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[8] This is partly owing to the unwillingness of continued from previous page: the negroes to remove to an unaccustomed place; but also, I think, to their rooted conviction that the only security for their independence is in having possession of the soil.

[9] Hanover has about one nineteenth of the whole population of the island. But the economical condition of the parishes varies too widely to make that of any one a basis for a general estimate.

Now the blacks of Hanover are just the same race as the rest of the negro population of the island. The only difference is that the whites of that parish, instead of treating them with contempt and neglect, have shown something of courtesy and care toward them. The numerous conversations which Mr. Underhill reports with the owners and managers of successful estates show how simple are the rules by which they secure success. To manifest a decent respect for the blacks, to be firm, but temperate and fair in dealing with them, to use the best improvements in machinery, and to exercise a strict economy of management—this appears to be the sum of the difference between prosperous and unprosperous plantations, provided of course that both are equally well situated for success.

Metcalfe, the writer's residence during most of his stay in Jamaica, is, like Hanover, a parish of small freeholders, but unlike Hanover, the blacks and the few whites are not on good terms. Excepting what has been done by missionaries, which is not a little, they are little indebted to any but themselves for their prosperity. And as one charged with their religious instruction, the writer can bear witness that for several years they have needed to be restrained from avarice more than to be stimulated to industry. A clergyman, a friend of mine, humorously complained that he had lost by stirring up his people to work, for that now they were so diligently employed upon their own places, that he could get scarcely anybody to work for him. The average number of acres owned by forty families, of which I made lists, is seven—a pretty fair estimate, I should judge, of the whole; and seven acres in Jamaica is equivalent in productiveness to a much larger amount here. One fourth had floored houses, and as large a proportion had sugar mills. Many of the families have one or two horses, worth commonly from £5 to £12 apiece. Not a few have mules, which are much more valuable; and nearly all the rest have donkeys. The proportion of floored and glazed houses, some of them shingled, is steadily though not very rapidly increasing; and I need not say that in that climate, and with their yet rudimentary ideas of comfort, a floor of earth is no indication of indigence.

The holdings vary from one to forty acres, but are more commonly from three to six. Almost every freeholder hires land besides, and a great deal of time is lost in going to distant pieces of ground. The wants of the people have increased faster than they reckoned on, and the land was bought up so rapidly around them that now they are subject to this disadvantage in making new purchases. In St. Ann, the Baptist congregations alone spent £10,000 in a few years in buying land.

The furniture of the poorer houses is miserably scanty; £3 would more than cover it. But the better houses, now multiplying year by year, boast their four-post bedsteads, often of the native mahogany, sometimes mahogany chairs, and corresponding articles. If a white family, on removing, expose their furniture to sale, it is caught up by the people with eagerness at almost any price asked. The very improvidence of the negroes stimulates their industry. They are exceedingly litigious, and exceedingly ostentatious on the few grand occasions they enjoy.[10] These luxuries, especially the former, cost them dear, but their very expense makes it the more necessary to work to find the means of indulging in them. Remunerative labor is eagerly sought after. The magnificent road now building through the island and traversing the parish of Metcalfe, has a superfluity of workmen, notwithstanding the shameful unfairness with which they have often been treated by the superintendents. I have known the people go in numbers to an estate ten miles distant, and remain there for weeks, except on the Saturdays and Sundays, away from their homes, working hard at digging and embanking, because they could secure one and sixpence sterling a day. I have often had occasion to employ men on short jobs, and though not unfrequently obliged to wait some time before securing a workman, I never suffered delay because they were too idle, but because they were too busy to attend to me. During my residence among them their progress in industry became too marked to be overlooked. However negligent our observations, we could not fail to notice the increasing patches of cane in some quarters, the extending provision grounds in others, the multiplying houses of the better sort, the earlier hours of going to the field, and the later hours coming from it at night. A firm

[10] In common, they are by no means either so tawdry or so ostentatious as they have the credit of being.

in Kingston, accustomed to sell the implements of negro labor, found the demand for tools increasing faster than they could supply it. And we were glad to find that they were becoming not merely more industrious, but more skilful in their industry. A friend, who had much to do with them, assured me that the young men greatly surpass their parents in forecast in the laying out of labor, and had got over the miserliness shown by the old people in providing means for carrying it on. He said a few years before he could not have sold a good tool, and now he could not sell a bad one. An old negro, he remarked, would groan over a sixpence extra in buying a tool; the young man would say: 'Come, let us have things in good style at the start, and our profits will soon pay for them.' Not that habits of industry are so confirmed that there are not a good many local and temporary relapses into the old careless ways. But the relapses are fitful, the advance is steady. Of course, with growing means their wants rise, and increasing wants in turn react happily upon their industry. The friend to whom I have several times referred, and who, being both a missionary and a proprietor, is placed in a pretty impartial equipoise of judgment, remarks that if some of those at home who imagine the Jamaica negro as lying lazily in the sun, eating bananas, could see the bill of fare of a good many black men, and compare it with what they were used to eat in time of slavery, they would probably be rather astonished. His estate is not large, but I remember that he has been unable for several weeks in the height of the sugar season to put up a barrel of sugar, on account of the people's buying it off in small quantities as fast as it was made. The many families that have small mills, of course, supply their own wants fully before they sell, and they commonly prefer selling the surplus among their neighbors to taking it down to the exporters. Thus it appears that the diminution in the exports of Jamaica is not wholly owing to the decrease of production. Mr. Underhill says he was assured by an overseer that the present consumption of sugar by the people of Jamaica was much greater proportionately than its use by the English, and there can be no doubt of this. It was very different in slavery. Undoubtedly there is less produced, much less, for production is diminished by the want of the ten thousand men a year that were used up to keep it at its highest point. Naturally, freemen prefer their own lives to the extra hogsheads of sugar that can be turned out by sacrificing them. It is also diminished by the steady fall in the price of sugar, which has made a difference between 1815 and 1850 of seventy-five per cent., rendering the inveterate extravagance of old management ruinous. It is diminished because slavery ruined confidence and good will between owners and laborers. It is diminished because an immense amount of labor has been diverted to the establishment of the homes, churches, and schools of a prosperous yeomanry. It is diminished because the growth of family life, though feeble and struggling, has withdrawn from the field wholly, or in part, thousands of women and children. It is diminished because higher than bodily necessities now consume time that was once rigorously denied to them. And lastly, it is diminished because the alienation caused by slavery has thrown upon themselves thousands of the emancipated bondmen, formerly accustomed to labor only as mechanical implements, to acquire skill, economy, and thrift by a long course of untutored experiments. On the other hand, much that is now produced makes no figure in the markets of the world, because it is consumed by the people themselves, no longer kept, for the profit of masters, at the lowest point at which they could maintain an animal existence. And not only do they consume so much, but they have enough left to buy from abroad whatever their increased necessities cannot find at home. It was not so in the good old times. Then the money that was made was sent to England to be spent by noble and gentle landlords there, and little good did Jamaica get of it. So little indeed was the island thought of even by the residents as a place to spend money on, so much as a place to get money in that was to be spent in England, that, as Mr. Sewell remarks, good roads have begun to be built, to any considerable extent, only since freedom. Forlorn as Kingston is, it was always forlorn; and not till slavery was abolished did they think to introduce the water which is now supplied in such abundance to the city. A rude profusion of luxury was all the planters aimed at till they could get home to the refinements of the mother country. In a word, in time of slavery, Jamaica was simply an aggregation of sugar and coffee mills, kept running by a stream of human blood. Now it is a land

whose inhabitants are free to live for themselves and for God, to enjoy the gifts of His hand, and to send into the markets of the world, not a surplus which has cost one hundred hecatombs of men each year, but a surplus which has cost no life, but whose rich fruits come back to cheer and adorn thousands of lives. Commerce may have lost by the change, and there may be some jewels the less in the coronets of English nobility, but we may be permitted to believe that Christ and humanity have no reason to grieve.

It must not be thought, however, that estates are going down as rapidly now as formerly. Indeed, for a few years, I question whether more have not been resumed than abandoned. In 1855 the value of exports of the four staples, coffee, pimento, rum, and sugar, was £786,429; in 1856, £814,659; in 1857, £1,141,472. I have not the statistics of the years following. This check to the ruin of the estates is a matter of rejoicing, for the entire abandonment of the island by the whites would be a great disaster. As Mr. Underhill well observes, the ascendency of the white man is needed to temper the enmity between the browns and the blacks. The former, who constitute about one fifth of the population, although sharing the wealth and intelligence of the whites, are regarded with strong dislike by the blacks. Hayti shows how dangerous it is to leave these two elements in a society without a moderating force. I cannot share the pleasure with which some anticipate the complete Africanization of the West Indies. European intelligence, European conscience, and European firmness of will are necessary to insure to the blacks the permanence of those rich blessings which emancipation has bestowed. The black man has the industry and is daily improving in the skill necessary to secure his material well-being; but for very many years to come, it would be a most disastrous thing for him, hazarding the loss of all that he has gained, to be deprived of either the religious or the political oversight of the white race. The planters of Jamaica are not distinguished by a very rigid morality or a very severe integrity, but their withdrawal would inflict incurable harm on intelligence, order, industry, and civilization. They may be contemptuously indifferent to the moral and intellectual improvement of the blacks, but they have no longer a lively interest in opposing it. By this time they are gradually becoming convinced that the spirit of slavery cannot be maintained when its power is gone, and are growing disposed, so far as they have dealings with the blacks, to deal with them on more equal terms. Bare justice may be the most they are willing to accord, but even that is a great gain. The journals in their interest no longer lavish on the freeholding blacks the abuse with which they once teemed, even after the writer went to the island. The planters are willing to admit, like those of Westmoreland in an appeal to the Assembly in behalf of immigration, 'that they do not find fault with the difficulty of getting labor, which is a necessary result of the easy acquisition of land,' The more candid are willing to say, as I heard a gentleman of their class observe: 'We do not complain of the negroes; they have done as well for themselves perhaps as any people would. But just because they are doing so well for themselves, they cannot be depended on to do well for us.' Hence the call for immigrant laborers; a just and reasonable call, if only the immigration is conducted with that rigid and conscientious care for the comfort of the immigrants for which Mr. Sewell gives the government of Trinidad credit, and if it is really voluntary. The fear that it will injure the negro, or that he dreads it, is wholly baseless. The negroes have remained utterly indifferent to the whole agitation of the subject, and are on perfectly amiable terms with the few coolies already introduced. Indeed it will be rather for their interest, as a negro remarked to Mr. Underhill, by giving them a better sale for their produce. The coolies now in the island appear to have done well. And the danger of overcrowding the population on a land teeming with tropical plenty, whose area of 6,400 square miles is occupied by but 441,000 inhabitants, is not a very imminent one, from any number within the means of the colony to introduce. And on the ability to procure foreign labor very much depends the hope of reviving the planting prosperity of Jamaica on a sounder basis, and in such a degree as is compatible with the substantial good of the whole population. It is true the population, relieved from the dreadful waste of slavery, is increasing. The census of 1844 showed a population of 377,433. That of 1861 showed one of 441,264, an increase of 63,831 in seventeen years. The immigration of coolies during that time has been between 18,000

and 20,000; the decrease of the whites, 3,000. The net increase by immigration then has been at the most 17,000, leaving 47,000 as the natural increase, or 12 per cent., in seventeen years. This is what remains after two terrible visitations of cholera, and one of small pox, all within eleven years, which together are computed to have swept off 40,000 persons. The increase would doubtless be much greater but for the loose living and careless habits of the negroes, and their almost entire destitution of medical attendance. There are now, it appears, but fifty qualified practitioners in the island, with no hopes of reinforcement.

The results of this census were very gratifying, and very unexpected. Such scanty means are there, ordinarily, of knowing the true condition of the country, that it was a prevailing impression that the population was decreasing. Had slavery continued, the present population would probably have been about 275,000. The difference of 165,000 in favor of freedom tells its own story. But the present necessities of the estates call for a more speedy augmentation of the laboring force than is furnished by natural increase alone.

I have omitted to mention in its proper place one gratifying sign that those minor industries which make so large a part of the prosperity of the wealthiest free communities, but which are neglected by the coarse labor of slaves, and have been particularly despised by the Jamaica planters, are now coming up in the island. Hitherto, sugar, rum, and coffee have been the all in all of prosperity to Jamaicans. But in 1838, the pimento export was 2,708,640 pounds; in 1858, 9,465,261 pounds. In 1838 the export of logwood was 8,432 cwt.; of fustic, 2,126 cwt.; of mahogany, 1,936 feet; of cocoanuts, 0; of honey, 0. In 1859, the export of logwood was 14,006 cwt.; of fustic, 2,329 cwt.; of mahogany, 35,000 feet; of cocoanuts, 712,913; of honey, 6,954 pounds. The ginger export has diminished from 1,834,120 pounds in 1841, to 709,620 pounds in 1858. This increase in the lesser articles of trade shows a brisker circulation in the capillaries of the social system, a sure token of reviving health. Indeed, before the writer left the island, that dreary uncertainty how affairs were turning, which prevailed for the first half of his stay, had given way to the returning cheerfulness arising from the feeling that Jamaica had touched bottom, and that henceforward, however slowly, her prospects were brightening. This cheerful feeling displays itself in a late report of Governor Darling to the Home Government, some paragraphs of which follow, quoted from Mr. Underhill's book, from which the writer has derived so large a part of the facts that he has had to take at second hand, and which he is glad again to commend as kindly, impartial, and full of carefully gathered and exactly appreciated information. His conjectural estimates of property, however, are exceptionable, as decidedly too high.

Governor Darling, himself a planter, says:

> 'The proportion of those who are settling themselves industriously on their holdings, and rapidly rising in the social scale, while commanding the respect of all classes of the community, and some of whom are, to a limited extent, themselves the employers of hired labor, paid for either in money or in kind, is, I am happy to think, not only steadily increasing, but at the present moment is far more extensive than was anticipated by those who are cognizant of all that took place in the colony in the earlier days of negro freedom.
>
> 'There can be no doubt, in fact, that an independent, respectable, and, I believe, trustworthy middle class is rapidly forming.... If the real object of emancipation was to place the freedman in such a position that he might work out his own advancement in the social scale, and prove his capacity for the full and rational enjoyment of personal independence, secured by constitutional liberty, Jamaica will afford more instances, even in proportion to its large population, of such gratifying results, than any land in which African slavery once existed.
>
> 'Jamaica, at this moment, presents, I believe, at once the strongest proof of the complete success of the great measure of emancipation, as relates to the capacity of

> the emancipated race for freedom, and the most unfortunate instance of a descent in the scale of agricultural and commercial importance as a colonial community.'

Governor Darling's words suggest the exact reason why Jamaica may be looked upon either as the most fortunate or the most unfortunate of the emancipated colonies. All depends upon the point of view. If the largest amount of individual well-being and the most favorable conditions of gaining independence and self-respect constitute a community fortunate, then Jamaica stands at the head of her island sisters. If immense wealth, centred in a few, constitutes a community fortunate, then Barbados is at the head. In Barbados the wealth of the planters is greater, in Jamaica the condition of the laborers is better. The late Mr. Sewell remarked to the writer that the common people in Jamaica had a more manly and self-respecting look than in any of the smaller islands which he had visited. It is much to be lamented that the divorce between the proprietary and the laboring interest was so complete in this island, and the consequent industrial anarchy so great. But even this was better than the depressed condition in which the peasantry of the smaller islands are kept by the hold that the planters have upon them. Manhood is a better crop than either sugar or coffee, and in the long run brings all other things with it. The article in the March number of the *Atlantic Monthly* for 1862, shows, in brief compass, what inestimable benefits have followed in the smaller islands from conferring the boon of personal freedom, even with so stringent a social dependence remaining. In Jamaica, freedom has been more complete, and the recoil of the social elements from each other more violent. The disaffection of the governing class has also been greater, and Freedom has been left to take care of herself.[11] But though thwarted and frowned upon, she is at the last justified of her children. Mr. Sewell has most happily hit the whole truth in a few lines: 'The crop' (of freedom), he says, 'appears in patches, even as it was sown, forcing itself here and there through the ruins of the fabric which disfigures still the political complexion of the island, and sorely cramps the energies of its people.' Governor Darling's words show how rapidly the crop, thus negligently sown, is forcing itself into prosperous and prevailing growth.

[11] A gradual change is, indeed, observable, but as yet, it is only an incipient one.

ABIJAH WITHERPEE'S RETREAT

For many years Abijah Witherpee had kept, in East Hampton, the largest country store for miles around, and by more than ordinary shrewdness had accumulated a snug little fortune, and with it the reputation among the country folk of being an immensely rich man. It is no trifle, as every one knows, in a small village, to be accounted its richest man, but that was the least of Abijah's honors. It appears by record that Abijah maintained the responsible—and, since Squire Adams has been gathered to his fathers, the solitary—dignity of justice of the peace in and for the county of which East Hampton formed a highly respectable portion. It was not the mere flourish of 'Esq.' at the end of the great man's name—it was the essence of the great man himself. It found him, as he was proud to think, an ordinary, commonplace individual. The good people of East Hampton saw what it had made him, and trembled. And well they might, where justice herself, in the person of the magistrate, stood in awe of her own responsibility and power.

We have been told that, at the outset of Squire Witherpee's administration, he held his breath at the thought of venturing upon judicial grounds with much the same uneasiness that the tyro in science exhibits in some new and hazardous experiment. The honors of office had grown scarcely a week old upon him, when opportunity offered for a full display of the 'feeling and perspiration' (to borrow the words of our informant) 'with which he dispensed justice at the lowest cash price.'

It was bright and early one winter morning that two tall, raw old farmers drove up to the 'West India Goods and General Emporium' establishment, and emerging from an avalanche of buffalo robes, made good their way into the back part of the store, where the customary knot of hangers-on was gathered around the stove, to drag through the day, doing nothing and talking politics. A single look convinced the proprietor that he was wanted 'professionally;' he was informed that they wished to have a deed executed. With great presence of mind, Abijah concealed every symptom of growing palpitation, and led the way out of the store into the kitchen of his house near by, where Mrs. Witherpee was busy ironing, and several little Witherpees at 'sixes and sevens' about the floor.

Like all justices, he thought it of prime importance to be assured that the instrument had been drawn up in proper shape, though he consumed about five times the time ordinarily devoted to such preliminaries. His protracted scrutiny would have alarmed the parties in waiting, less gifted as they were in the mysteries of legal lore, had it not been for a generous approval that he gave at intervals, of 'Wells' and 'Ahems', in a tone that was intended to let them know he was doing them a special favor to think so well of what they had submitted.

'Well, my friends,' he remarked, laying down the sacred document, 'it seems that at this stage of proceedings, the statute requires that—' and then a pause which was solemn enough.

"Squire, hadn't I ought to sign that 'ar now?' timidly suggested one of the party. The 'Squire was taking a hasty run over the pages of the 'Town Justice' for instruction in such emergencies, but finding none, he kept on at a venture, and replied with native dignity: 'I decide you'd ought to.'

While the 'grantor' was 'putting his hand and seal' to the deed, in the largest-sized penmanship that can conveniently be displayed on half a foot of paper with all the advantages of a slant up hill, the magistrate had arrived at the place desired, and was now 'in his element.' Kindly, and yet with no lack of firmness, he is said to have turned to Mrs. Witherpee and observed:

'Wife, I think you'd better go into the next room and take the children with you!'

After this fraction of the family had been removed to a place of safety, the prudent husband and father continued:

'Hold up your hands! You severally and solemnly swear that this is all right, true, and legal, according to the provisions of the Constitution of the United States, and the laws and regulations of the State of–. So help you God, gentlemen, and me, Abijah Witherpee, Justice of the Peace, fee two

shillings.' There is reason to believe that both parties experienced a sense of relief when the crisis was over, and the requirements of the law had been satisfied.

Rich and varied as Abijah's legal experiences may have been, it was not on their account that he has been introduced, but rather for the contemplation of his 'fine points' as a citizen. He was never classed among those men who exaggerate to the assessors the value of their worldly possessions; in fact, it was always difficult to discover where 'what little money he had' *was* invested. There was one piece of property, however, of which he not only acknowledged himself the owner, but publicly declared he never would dispose of, a threat that seemed harmless enough, there not being the slightest possibility that any one else would be willing to hold such a miserable waste on any pretext whatever:—a half acre down by the railroad, slabsided, full of gnarled stumps and brake, and about equally distributed into rock, black mud, and water. Had the original trees been standing, it must have approached quite as near the correct type of the 'howling wilderness,' the *horrida inculta*, as could be exhibited this side of 'Turkey Buzzard's Land, Arkansas.' Few strangers were suffered to pass by the locality in company with any of the East Hampton folk, without having their attention directed to 'Abijah Witherpee's Retreat;' and the opinion was apt to be freely ventured that at some period of his life, that gentleman had come into what is popularly termed 'a tight fix.'

The place had originally belonged to nobody in particular, and one day fell into the hands of a Mr. Jones, at a merely nominal price, in connection with a large tract through which it was thought the railroad, then contemplated, would be likely to run. The railroad changed its mind, as all railroads do, and Mr. Jones's speculation was not so profitable as he had anticipated. It happened that among his friends was a wild, freakish fellow, Charley Davis, who undertook to be on the best of terms with everybody, and had succeeded admirably, with the exception of Justice Witherpee, who, he swore, had swindled him outrageously in a business transaction they had together in getting out lumber. What made it all the worse, the aggrieved party used to say, was the shameful manner in which the 'old reprobate' would publicly boast of it.

'I say, Jones,' exclaimed the Major (as he was called) one day as he sat smoothing off a new ramrod for his fowling piece, 'what would you say to a chance of getting that old stick-in-the-mud, Witherpee, on the hip? I rather flatter myself that I can do it.'

'Go ahead, my son,' said Jones, pleasantly, by way of encouragement.

'You own that infernal piece of swamp down by the railroad crossing, don't you? That air's a valuable piece of real estate!'

'Well, yes. It's never been spoilt by too much cultivation that I know of.'

'I reckon I can just get a heap of money for that air; and what's more, I can have the satisfaction of selling it to a gentleman who can appreciate it.'

'It does you credit, Major. That's what I call a genuine love of nature. It ain't every man that sees the beauties of a first-class rural retreat like that,' and the speaker's countenance was radiant with benignity—whether at the high-toned sentiment of his friend, or at the prospect of getting the better of the 'Squire, it was difficult to determine. He thought it well, however, to add: 'But I'd advise you to be mighty careful if you're calc'lating to run a saw on old 'Bijh. What's your programme?'

'You see this here interesting and valuable collection of gold dust,' said the Major, producing a vial which contained particles of the ore in unusual abundance, and flourishing it in his hand in a manner intensely theatrical. 'Belonging to a friend of mine, he donates it for this occasion only, so to speak. It will appear, of course, to have been dug out of a piece of ground belonging to that highly respectable and public spirited citizen, Mr. G. G. Jones. With a cupidity not at all to be wondered at, I shall attempt to keep the matter secret and immediately to make a purchase. I shall apply to Witherpee, as a man of wealth, to advance me part of the funds, or get him, rather, to act as my agent in buying it, because you, Jones, a friend of mine, would suspect me of being up to something if I should offer to buy it myself. D'ye see the bait, now? Catch *him* playing off!'

As further conversation was modulated to an undertone, and accompanied with a complete signal code of nods and chuckles, it is fair to presume that Mr. J. *did* see the bait—and was sure of a good nibble too.

No time was lost before the speculator and his victim had their knees under the same table—with a mug of hard cider between them. Mingled suspicion and avarice in Abijah's expression argued well for the success of the scheme. As is often the case, his love of money was only surpassed by the credulity with which he gave ear to new plans for satisfying it. He was slow to trust Davis, because they had not been the best of friends, but the Major played his cards so well that the old fellow did not waver long:

'All you will have to do is to hand it right over to me, you know, and take your commission money. You see just as well as I do that it wouldn't do no how for me to undertake it on my own hook.'

And the 'Squire said, 'Yes, certainly,' but couldn't see it distinctly either, and after they had fixed upon the maximum price, and the 'Squire had feasted his eyes once more on the 'real glitter,' and Charley had explained for the twenty-first time that the divining rod had demonstrated the singular fact that not a bit of ground outside that particular lot was worth a red cent to prospect on, and the 'Squire had once for all swallowed the whole story, and declared it the most remarkable thing he ever heard of, he consented to act as agent in the purchase.

For some unaccountable reason, Abijah Witherpee found Mr. Jones not at all in the humor for a bargain. The land wasn't worth much, he knew, and it was very handsome in the 'Squire to offer fifty dollars for it, but the fact was that his feelings somehow prompted him to keep it: it was a silly idea, perhaps, but he had always thought, ever since he had owned the land, that some day it would be worth gold to him.

'Gracious goodness!' thought Abijah; 'Jones swore that it was a secret that only he and the diviner knew. Could this man have felt it out by animal magnetism, or anything of that sort?' But his mind was at ease again when he was assured by further conversation that the owner was entirely ignorant of the momentous truth. The 'Squire's offers were tempting, and, from byplay and bantering, at last amounted to what appeared a perfectly fabulous sum. The upshot of the matter was that the coolheaded Jones got rid of the wretched little lot for $490 cash. The purchaser was now quite sure that he was the shrewdest fellow in that part of the country.

Just as had been anticipated, the agent's next move was to lay claim to the auriferous region himself, and refuse to turn it over to the lawful owner. The Major exhibited a proper degree of anxiety to learn the results of the interview, and appeared well enough satisfied with the price—high as it was.

He was deaf to every proposition of the 'Squire, who was ready almost to double on the purchase money; till at last the latter declared point blank that he meant to stick to the property himself; that the agreement was verbal merely, and he would have ownership in writing, in spite of what Major Davis or anybody else could do. It was in vain that the Major protested and threatened prosecution for swindling, and called witnesses to the transaction. Before sunset, Witherpee was the sole and indisputable proprietor of the newly discovered El Dorado.

It is hardly worth while to state how so extraordinary a financier succeeded when he came to actual prospecting. It was currently reported that there was 'some pretty tall digging going on down in that swamp lot.' It required a lengthy series of geological arguments, with practical illustrations, to convince 'Squire Witherpee that the soil of East Hampton was somewhat feeble in the production of the precious metals—except, perhaps, in a metaphorical sense.

When he talked of 'taking the law on those rascals,' he found after all that the best thing he could do was not to move in the matter at all. Mr. Jones and his friend were no rascals, and took pleasure in contributing every cent of the money to the town fund for supporting the poor. Abijah Witherpee was since known to have acknowledged that though rather hard, it was no more than he had deserved, and the change that was wrought in his dealings gained him from that time no more faithful friends than the confederates, Jones and the Major.

REASON, RYHME, AND RYTHM

CHAPTER III.—THE INFINITE

The Divine Attributes are the base of all true Art

No work of art can be considered truly beautiful unless it recalls or reproduces, even in its finite form, some of the divine attributes; not that the work must treat of them, or consciously suggest them to the intellect, but that they must enter into the creation of the artist, that the immediate and intuitive perception of beauty, always attached to their manifestation, may appeal to those faculties or instincts which ever answer in delight when these attributes are suggested to the human spirit; for, consciously or unconsciously, the soul yearns for a clearer view of the beauty of God.

Whatever good there may be desirable by man, more especially good belonging to his moral nature, there will be a corresponding agreeableness in whatever external object reminds him of such good, whether it remind him by arbitrary association, by typical resemblance, or by awakening intuitions of the divine attributes, which he was created to glorify and to enjoy eternally. Leibnitz says:

> 'The perfections of God are those of our own souls, but He possesses them without limit; He is the exhaustless ocean from which we have received but a drop; we have some power, some wisdom, some love; but God is all power, all wisdom, all love. Order, unity, proportion, harmony, enchant us; painting, sculpture, music, poetry, charm us in the degree in which, in their appropriate spheres, they have succeeded in manifesting fragments of the above: but God is all order, all proportion, all unity, all harmony; and all beauty visible here is but a dim reflex of the eternal rays.'

The fact of our deriving constant pleasure from whatever is a type or semblance of the divine attributes, and from nothing enduringly but that which is, is the most ennobling of all that can be said of human nature, not only setting a great gulf of specific separation between us and the brutes that perish, but it seems a promise of a communion ultimately deep, close, and conscious with the Being in whose darkened manifestations we here unconsciously and instinctively delight. It is at least probable that the higher the order of intelligences, the more of the divine image becomes palpable in all around them, and the redeemed spirits and angels may have perceptions as much more full and rapturous than ours, as ours than those of the beasts and creeping things. It may be received almost as an axiom that no natural instinct or desire can be entirely frustrated, and as these desires for the beautiful are so unfailing that they have not escaped the thinkers of any age, but were held divine of old, and even in heathen countries, it must be admitted that in these visionary pleasures, lightly as we may now be disposed to regard them, there are causes of gratitude, grounds of hope, anchors of faith, more than in all the manifold material gifts with which God mercifully crowns the years and hedges the path of men.

We turn to Plato to show how clearly such ideas were held by the thinkers of antiquity:

> 'Eternal beauty, not created, not made; exempt from increase or decay; not beautiful in one part and deformed in another, beautiful in such a time, such a place, such a relation; not beauty which hath any sensible parts or anything corporeal, or which may be found comprised in any one thought or science, or residing in any creation different from itself, as in an animal, the earth, or the heavens;—but

> absolute beauty, identical and invariable in itself; beauty in which, would they please the spirit of men, other things must participate, but their creation or destruction brings IT neither diminution, increase, nor the slightest change.'

Plotinus writes in the same spirit:

> 'Let him who has closed his eyes upon mere sensuous beauty, advance boldly into the depths of the sanctuary. Let him reverently gaze upon the true beauty, the original type of those pale and fleeting images to which he may have hitherto applied the holy name of beautiful.'

We propose to consider reverently and with a humble sense of the limited sphere from which we must regard the infinite, some of the divine attributes, which must, in the finite mode, enter into every creation of artistic excellence. We begin our reflections with the infinite itself.

Infinite—this word is by no means the expression of a clear idea: it is merely the expression of an effort to attain one. It stands for the possible attempt at an impossible conception. Man needed a term by which to point out the direction of this effort—the cloud behind which lay, forever invisible, the object of this attempt. The fact is, that upon the enunciation of any one of that class of terms to which 'infinite' belongs—the class representing thoughts of thought—he who has a right to say he thinks at all, feels himself called upon, not to entertain a conception, but simply to direct his mental vision toward some given point, in the intellectual firmament, where lies a nebula never to be resolved. And yet to this very point, which the intellect cannot define, are our spirits forever tending. No artistic creation ever fully pleases unless there is given in it some suggestion of this mystic attribute, underlying and permeating all other attributes of Deity. It is the dim unconscious feeling after this attribute which causes the forever recurring dissatisfaction with the finite, which so ruthlessly pursues us through life. It is the source of that vague but tender longing, that restless but dreamy yearning, that haunting melancholy, which characterize human souls created for the enjoyment of the infinite; divining and insatiably thirsting for the absolute.

Let us now attempt to trace some of the various ways in which this feeling after the infinite manifests itself. Plato and his school tried to explain the existence of absolute ideas in the soul by the hypothesis of its preëxistence to that of the body in the bosom of the Absolute, the Infinite, the Eternal; and, consequently, that such ideas are but reminiscences of a more perfect life. We find the following passage in an ode of Wordsworth's:

> 'Our birth is but a sleep, and a forgetting:
> The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
> Hath had elsewhere its setting,
> And cometh from afar
> Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory do we come
> From God, who is our home.
>
> 'Hence, in a season of calm weather,
> Though inland far we be,
> Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
> Which brought us hither,
> Can in a moment travel thither,
> And see the children sport upon the shore,
> And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.'

It seems useless here to enter upon the vexed subject of 'innate ideas,' or to attempt to convince the reader, metaphysically, that the very negation contained in the word finite, necessarily suggests its affirmation in the word infinite. Enough that the idea of the infinite is certainly found in the mind of man, that he seeks it in the material world, in himself, in God. High gifts may have been wrought into the dim soul, which are destined to be gradually awakened through the growing perceptions of the mind. Every spiritual being created by eternal love may have had imparted to him a ray from the sun of eternal love, which, in its due time and place, is to manifest itself in his consciousness. Such participation in God as the primary source of all that is to abide eternally with the redeemed, has, in the present state of our vague consciousness, been described by men who felt its stirrings in their soul as the memory of eternal love. It might more properly be called an intuition of eternal love; such an instinct as leads the chrysalis to prepare for the change which it certainly does not understand. Life, such as the beat of the heart, the action of the lungs, is not manifested to the consciousness—neither is the source of this intuition, which, however, gives evidence of itself by an intuitive feeling of incessant longing. It reveals its presence constantly; sometimes in an undefinable feeling of profound desire, satisfied with no earthly object, yet but vaguely directed to the eternal or divine; sometimes in a profound and absorbing religiosity. This longing exists in an inchoate state; it is a love yet to be developed. From this mystic root springs much that is intellectually great, even the love of scientific certainty. Philosophy may, indeed, almost be termed the science of longing.

Developing in its normal growth, it gives us our true saints; those who live but to love God, and to serve man. But like all human gifts, it may be perverted. It is some such perverted apprehension or illusory longing for the infinite, which causes a man to surrender himself, heart and soul, to the despotic tyranny of some ruling habit, some favorite and engrossing pursuit. Alas! it often leads the most gifted of our race to devote all their energies, thoughts, feelings, to one faulty, fading, changing object, vainly pouring that worship upon the creature, which should be rendered only to the Creator.

'He that sits above
In His calm glory, will forgive the love
His creatures bear each other, even if blent
With a vain worship, for its close is dim
Ever with grief, which leads the wrung soul back to Him.'

The despair which this feeling sometimes occasions in the perverted soul of one intent upon feeding it with the gross aliments of the debased senses, is, without doubt, a very frequent cause of suicide. It may lead, in the soul of the infidel or sensualist, to the idolatry of art. It is a feeling, and requires direction. When enlightened by revelation and purified by faith, it manifests itself in the sublime abnegation and ardent love of the faithful follower of Jesus Christ.

This instinctive longing for the infinite, existing in the soul itself, cannot be satisfied by any earthly longing, sensual gratification, or external possession. Made 'to glorify God and enjoy Him forever,' man is ruined and eternally miserable if he refuse to fulfil the destiny for which he was created. His misery springs from the root of his greatness; it is because there is an infinite in him, which, with all his cunning, he cannot succeed in burying under the finite. This is a pregnant subject; under this strange caption might be written the psychological history of most human despair.

'The Fiend that man harries
Is love of the Best;
Yawns the pit of the Dragon
Lit by rays from the Blest.
The Lethe of nature
Can't trance him again,

Whose soul sees the Perfect
His eyes seek in vain.'

Thus is faith a necessity of the soul, 'the evidence of things not seen.'

The idea of eternity is necessarily evolved from the negation contained in the limited meaning of the word time. Eternity is the all embracing, completely complete time; eternity, which is infinite not only *a parte externa*, that is everpassing yet everlasting, without beginning and without end; but also infinite *a parte interna*—so that in the endlessly living, thoroughly luminous present, the whole past, also the whole future, are equally actual, equally clear, and equally present to us, as the very present itself. Can we indeed form any other conception of a state of *perfect* bliss? Is the idea of a state of entire happiness at all compatible with the regret that must be felt for a blissful past; the consciousness of a flying present; and the fear of an uncertain future? Yet the idea of time does not seem necessarily excluded from a conception of the essence and operations of God. Does there in very reality exist such an absolute opposition between time and eternity, that it is quite impossible for them to subsist in any mutual contact or relation? Is there no transition from the one to the other conceivable? Is eternity anything more than time vitally full, blissfully complete? If eternity is nothing more than the living, full, essential time, and if our earthly, fettered, and fragmentary time is, as the great poet says, 'out of joint,' fallen with man's disobedience to his God into a state of strange disorder —it is easily conceivable that the two do not stand apart so as to have no mutual contact. Those who have seen a holy death leave a calm and beautiful smile upon the face of a dying Christian, can scarcely help believing that the beginning of a blissful eternity has impressed itself upon the rapt features, actually breaking through the shackles of time before the prisoner was emancipated from its fetters. And those brief intervals of rapture which are sometimes experienced in the midst of earnest and ardent devotion—what are they but eternity thus manifesting itself through time in the soul? Those who have been rescued from the very jaws of death, frequently tell us that the moment preceding insensibility was crowded and filled with vivid recollections of the whole apparently forgotten past —thus bringing into the soul in the midst of time, a foretaste and interval of eternity! and those prophetic intimations of things yet to be, which frequently break in with startling power upon the human spirit, what indeed are they but sudden contacts between our fettered time, 'so out of joint,' and the fulness of eternity? Men rave against the justice of eternal punishment, as if its duration were not essentially part of their own immortality! Ah! if the memories of the deeds done in the body are essentially undying, were it not well for us that the writing traced against us by our own hands should be nailed to the cross, obliterated in the blood of the Immaculate Victim? that mystic blood which has bathed the universe!

The innate longing for the infinite, with its accompanying intuitions of the eternal love, and the yearnings for that fulness of time when the past and future shall live with us as really as the present itself, are ever vivid within us, and are two of the great vital arteries of all true art. This burning human thirst for the fulness of eternity in opposition to our fragmentary time manifests itself in our agonizing efforts to bring back the past, to which sad efforts we have given the melancholy name of memory; shows itself in our restless longing for the future, which we call hope; and frequently reveals itself in an insane seizing upon something in the imperfect and fleeting present, which it insists upon worshipping, in regarding as divine. Upon this last phase is dependent all that excited, exaggerated, but frequently beautiful passion of language which marks our poems of love. Ah! it is the merciful will of the Creator that we should worship only the divine, and so the human passion ends in sobs and wails of anguish, for the finite idol can never fill the shrine of the Absolute, the infinite God!

As the intuition of eternal love in the past, we find this longing for the infinite breathing through poetry in the form of elegy; in sad recollections of a faded world of demigods and heroes; and in the plaints for the loss of man's native home in Paradise, in the faint and dying echoes of the happy innocence of creation before the first outbreak of evil, and the consequent misery of

nature. Poetry is indeed so full of haunting, melancholy memories, that it might almost be called the 'mind's supersensuous recollection of the eternal.' And what else can be said of music? Is it not an art eminently addressed to this intuition of eternal love, this constant longing for the infinite? Do not its giddy flights and dying falls at once arouse this mystic yearning, seeking, feeling, which may appropriately be termed the passion of the soul? That music holds some deep relation to the soul not yet clearly developed, may be inferred, not only from the magic power it sways over our spirits, but from the fact that the inspired writers picture it among the joys of heaven. It is now the language of our 'divine despair;' it is yet to be the speech of our eternal beatitude!

'God is love:' through all the hidden veins of ever-germing life beats this divine pulse of universal being. Hope, faith, and charity spring from the revelation and answering intuitions of this blissful love: from the hope, faith, and love of men sprang all the really noble works of art. All this is full of consolation, 'though inward far we be'—even the mournful memory of a past of celestial innocence becomes the harbinger of a divine hope. Let the poet then still sing of the past; like the glories of the setting sun flushing down the golden west, it but whispers of a more glorious rise in the mythic east. The root of art springs from the intuitions of eternal love; its leaves, flowers, and fruit, are faith, hope, and charity. May the rapt artist ever remember that the beauty of this earth was not intended to satisfy the requisitions of his longing soul, but to awaken and nourish in it the love of eternal beauty!

A golden thread of glories yet to be, twines through the woof of this our mortal life, and by tracing its wavy lines of glittering brilliancy, shining even through the dim symbolism of matter, many secrets of the life to come may be divined. The arts may be regarded as significant hieroglyphics of delights yet to be fulfilled in other spheres of being. The living pulse of omnipotence, the heart of God, beats sensibly in the beauty of the boundless universe; it is the fountain at which the young immortal is to imbibe his first draught for eternity. Not that, as erroneously held by the Pantheists, nature is God, no more than Raphael is the pictures he paints; but assuming the existence of a God as the creator of the worlds, what else can nature be but a revelation of God and divine love, a visible and symbolic representation thereof in matter; living, because His breath is life?

The following remarkable passage on the religious origin and consecutive order of the arts occurs in De La Mennais' 'Sketch of Philosophy:'

> 'The temple of art is an emanation from that Divine Spirit who fills it with Himself. It is the plastic evolution of the idea which man has of Him, of His nature, of His ways, as manifested in the universe. From its central sanctuary in which He, the unseen, dwells, this temple projects, extending itself in space in every direction; but by an opposite movement all its parts, closely united, converge to the sanctuary, gravitating toward the central point where their Head, their essential and primordial Reason, dwells; they struggle to penetrate its mystic veil, to mingle with it, to have their being in it, in order to accomplish the perfect union of variety with unity, of the finite with the infinite.
>
> 'The art temple struggles to develop itself by a process analogous to that of creation. The surface of the earth was first clothed with vegetation, from the lowly moss and creeping lichen to the lofty cedar, whose solemn branches mingle with the floating clouds. When the earth was ready for their habitation, came the animals, gifted with higher life, with spontaneous motion, with instinct and sensibility. At last came man, endowed with the incomparable faculties of love and reason.
>
> 'The art temple has also its vegetation. Its walls are covered with varied plants, which wind along its cornices and wreathe its plinths; they blossom round the oriels, brightening or deepening in the light; they twine through the nerves of the vaulted arch; like the liane of the cedars, they embrace the tall minarets of the heaven-seeking spire, mounting into the blue depths of ether; they bind the clustering shafts

of the columns in heavy sheaves, and crown their capitals with flowers and foliage. The stone grows more and more animated, puts forth in more luxuriant growth; multitudes of new forms spring up in the bosom of this magnificent creation; when lo! at length man completes and embodies them all—his own noble image stands revealed—the rude, but white and glittering stone glows almost into life under the passion of his forming hand.

'Sculpture is but an immediate development of architecture, proceeding naturally and organically from it. In proof of this, we have only to examine it in its first efforts. Forms, unfinished and embryonic, at first closely attached to the stone, growing by degrees in accordance with their own fixed laws until able to detach themselves from the medium through which they were originated, after having acquired the conditions necessary for their individual life, spring to actual life, to independent life, almost as the organized being springs from the womb of its mother.

'Sculpture, however, represents but imperfectly the marvellous glories of God's creation. It can give but faint ideas of the various effects of light and shade, the constantly shifting play of colors; it cannot offer that full harmony of beauty which nature is ever spreading before us in the complicated scenes of life. To satisfy this want, a new art is created! Closely linked with all those which have preceded it, its development is but their legitimate expansion. The gray and stern arches, the hitherto colorless sky of the art temple, now take the azure hue of the heavens, while hovering cherubs look down from their cerulean depths; the relievos glow, and color defines, as it etherealizes, the works of man. Painting, at first absorbed in the plastic arts, scarcely begins to show symptoms of life until she is fully born, and living in her own distinctive form! As that power which develops the almost infinite variety of forms is to the universe, so is painting with its ever ready and vivid canvas to the temple of art.

'Meanwhile the art temple has not remained wrapped in gloomy silence; and another series of developments, bearing the same relation to sound and hearing as the first did to light and sight, have commenced. As beings ascend in the scale of life, the forms appealing to sight alone, become less capable of expressing their nature. If the universe had been without voice, the highest which it contains had been shrouded in the pall of an eternal silence; but creation has a voice which is specific in every genus, in every species, in every individual. Transport yourself in thought to one of the vast solitudes of the New World—listen to the rustling of the myriad-leafed forests as they forever murmur on the banks of the thousands of nameless and unknown streams which ripple through them; to the clash of the impetuous torrents as they rush down the precipitous sides of the mountains to glide on from their feet through beds of soft moss or sedgy grass; to the booming thunder, driving, scattering, and tearing the flying clouds; to the intermingling sounds arising from the myriads of creatures which are roaring, bellowing, humming, buzzing, hissing, singing, upon the bosom of this primeval world—listen! this is the voice of nature, indistinct and confused, but majestic, solemn, multitudinous, full of mystery and palpitating with vague emotions.

'As the art temple symbolizes the creation, is the plastic image of it, a voice is also heard from its depths, which rides upon the winds, and pierces afar off. The echo of an invisible world, it is solemn, mysterious, and multiform, appealing to the inmost feelings, rousing the sleeping powers, awakening the internal life of the soul, which without it might lie forever benumbed and silent. Corresponding to the voice of nature, it, too, is specifically marked, is individualized in every medium

> through which it is produced. Developing in unceasing variety, yet ever bound in the closest unity, language syllables air into thought, love. As soon as man mingles his voice, his speech, with that of inferior beings, the whole creation is enlarged, dilates and throbs with new and glowing life. A closer tie unites the two worlds—the world of phenomena and the world of ideas. Rising from the bosom of organic nature, pressing up like a bud closely wrapped in its sheaf of clustering and sheltering leaves, destined to indefinite development, the human word is born; it is named: Oratory, Poetry, Music! The art temple is now complete. Symbol of the universe, it represents all that is contained therein under the glittering veil of art.'

It is strange how, in the middle ages, the temple of art almost grew into one with the temple of faith; to this fact may be traced the elevated and devout character of the *chefs-d'œuvre* of those dim centuries. Thus the church became a sublime poem, where the glowing imagination of a tender faith lavished all its glories. That the Christian church then satisfied the heart with its mystic dogmas and symbolic representations, is proved by the fact that the masses did not care how obscure and squalid their own hovels might be, provided the temple was great and magnificent. It was the temple of simple, unreasoning, unquestioning faith, but decorated with the highest marvels of art; it was always thrown open to the people, and in it they passed nearly half their days. Man brought what he held to be his best to the temple in which he came to worship God, and in it was concentrated all the world knew of beauty. Its light but ornate steeples seemed to pierce the very clouds; its columns rivalled the shafts of the forest; its balustrades were exquisitely chiselled; its tapestry inwrought with the finest needle work;—all gave evidence that the hand of love had lingered tenderly over every line in the house dedicated by man to his Maker. The pictured saints and angels seemed to smile upon the kneeling people, while the majestic chants and requiems sounded to them like the very voices of the angels, heard from within the 'jasper gates' of the heavenly city. The white-robed and entoning priests were their joy and pride; they, as well as the cherished artists, were most frequently from their own oppressed ranks. Religion and art were alone then democratic; alone expounded to them the original equality of man. Thus they looked upon these temples, which art beautified for faith, as peculiarly their own, their refuge, their solace, their ark of safety in those times of war and trouble. They earnestly and devoutly believed them to be the sanctuaries of the risen God, in which dwelt his glorified Body. With the first rays of the sun flushing with roseate hues the mystic beauty of the temple, they congregated there to receive, in the glorious unity of a common humanity, Him whom the heavens cannot contain—the Son of God. They did not think, they felt; they could not reason, but they heard the church. Naive, simple, and trusting souls, with the Virgin to smile upon them, and the saints to pray for them.

It cannot surely be denied that art is full of indefinite and instinctive longing for the infinite. Poetry is full of its pining voice. Chateaubriand says:

> 'When we are alone with nature, the feeling of the infinite forces itself irresistibly upon us. When the universe with its inexhaustible variety opens before us, when we contemplate the myriads of stars moving in ever-mystic harmony through the limitless immensity of space, when we gaze upon the ocean mingling with the sky in the boundless distance of the far horizon, when the earth and sea are rocked into profound calm, and creation itself seems wrapped in mystic contemplation—an undefinable feeling of melancholy seizes upon us, unknown desires awaken in the soul, they seem to call us into other countries far beyond the limits of the known—must it not then be the vague feeling after, the dim longing for, the infinite, which at such moments we feel strangely stirring in the calm depths of the divining soul?'

We find the same yearning breathing through the following beautiful poem of Mrs. Osgood's:

'As plains the home-sick ocean shell
Far from its own remembered sea,
Repeating, like a fairy spell,
Of love, the charmed melody
It learned within that whispering wave,
Whose wondrous and mysterious tone
Still wildly haunts its winding cave
Of pearl, with softest music-moan—

'So asks my home-sick soul below,
For something loved, yet undefined;
So mourns to mingle with the flow
Of music from the Eternal Mind;
So murmurs, with its childlike sigh,
The melody it learned above,
To which no echo may reply
Save from thy voice, Eternal Love!'

It is to his fervent and fiery expression of this longing for the infinite, characterizing, whether pure or perverted, almost the whole of Byron's poetry, breaking out sometimes in imprecations and despair, and not to his immorality, that his great popularity is to be attributed. Even in the midst of the most unhappy scepticism, it was the haunting passion of his soul. Alas! that this longing for the food of heaven should have been fed on husks until the lower rungs of the heaven ladder became so covered with the corruption of matter and fiery sparks of evil, that it seemed rather meant for the foul feet of demons, than for the elastic tread of the redeemed human soul to God! We quote from him in proof:

'Blue rolls the water, blue the sky
Spreads like an ocean hung on high,
Bespangled with those isles of light,
So wildly, spiritually bright;
Who ever gazed upon them shining
Nor turned to earth without repining,
Nor wished for wings to flee away,
And mix with their eternal ray?'

'Oh, thou beautiful
And unimaginable ether! and
Ye multiplying masses of increased
And still increasing lights! what are ye?
What
Is this blue wilderness of interminable
Air, wherein ye roll along as I have seen
The leaves along the limpid streams of
Eden?

Is your course measured for ye? or do ye
Sweep on in your unbounded revelry
Through an aerial universe of endless

Expansion, at which my soul aches to think—
Intoxicated with eternity?'

'All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
And breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep;—
All heaven and earth are still: from the high host
Of stars, to the lulled lake and mountain coast,
All is concentred in a life intense,
Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
But hath a part of being, and a sense
Of that which is of all Creator and Defence.

'Then stirs the *feeling infinite*, so felt
In solitude, where we are least alone;
A truth, which through our being then doth melt,
And purify from self: it is a tone
The soul and source of music, which makes known
Eternal harmony, and sheds a charm,
Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,
Binding all things with beauty; 'twould disarm
The spectre Death, had he substantial power to harm.'

In some of the most forcible lines ever penned, Byron has given us the whole psychological analysis of the effects of human passion, when, in its insane perversion, and misdirected thirst for the infinite, it pours upon the dust that love and worship which is due to God alone. No one who has thus sinned, will refuse to acknowledge their force and truth. Fearful in their Medusa-like beauty, they fascinate the heart, only to turn its warm pulses into ice. They are actually withering in their despair. Poor Byron! did he never, never cry with the repentant but happy St. Augustin: 'Oh, eternal beauty! too late have I known thee!'

'Alas! our young affections run to waste,
Or water but the desert; whence arise
But weeds of dark luxuriance, tares of haste,
Rank at the core, though tempting to the eyes,
Flowers whose wild odors breathe but agonies,
And trees whose gums are poison; such the plants
Which spring beneath her steps, as Passion flies
O'er the world's wilderness, and vainly pants
For some *celestial fruit* forbidden to our wants.

'O Love! no habitant of earth thou art—
An unseen seraph, we believe in thee;
A faith whose martyrs are the broken heart,
But never yet hath seen, nor e'er shall see
The naked eye, thy form, as it should be;
The mind hath made thee, as it peopled heaven
Even with its own desiring phantasy,
And to a thought such shape and image given,

As haunts the unquenched soul—parched—wearied—wrung and riven.

'Of its own beauty is the mind diseased,
And fevers into false creation:—where,
Where are the forms the sculptor's soul hath seized?
In him alone. Can Nature show so fair?
Where are the charms and virtues which we dare
Conceive in boyhood and pursue as men,
The unreached Paradise of our despair,
Which o'er informs the pencil and the pen,
And overpowers the page where it would bloom again?

'Who loves, raves—'tis youth's frenzy—but the cure
Is bitterer still; as charm by charm unwinds
Which robed our idols, and we see too sure
Nor worth nor beauty dwells from out the mind's
Ideal shape of such; yet still it binds
The fatal spell, and still it draws us on,
Reaping the whirlwind from the oft-sown winds;
The stubborn heart, its alchemy begun,
Seems ever near the prize—wealthiest when most undone.

'We wither from our youth, we gasp away—
Sick—sick; unfound the boon—unslaked the thirst,
Though to the last, in verge of our decay
Some phantom lures, such as we sought at first—
But all too late, so are we doubly cursed.
Love, fame, ambition, avarice—'tis the same,
Each idle—and all ill—and none the worst—
For all are meteors with a different name,
And Death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame.

'Few—none—find what they love or could have loved,
Though accident, blind contact, and the strong
Necessity of loving, have removed
Antipathies—but to recur, ere long,
Envenomed with irrevocable wrong;
And circumstance, that unspiritual god
And miscreator, makes and helps along
Our coming evils with a crutch-like rod,
Whose touch turns hope to dust—the dust we all have trod.

'Our life is a false nature—'tis not in
The harmony of things,—this hard decree,
This uneradicable taint of sin,
This boundless Upas, this all blasting tree.
Whose root is earth, whose leaves and branches be
The skies which rain their plagues on men like dew—

Disease—death—bondage—all the woes we see—
And worse—the woes we see not—which throb through
The immedicable soul, with heartaches ever new.'

Again:

'What is the worst? Nay, do not ask—
In pity from the search forbear:
Smile on—nor venture to unmask
Man's heart, and view the hell that's there!'

Merciful God! how men suffer when they fly from Thee. When they refuse to listen to the sublime voice implanted within, which calls them to Thee, forever reminding them that they were made for things infinite, eternal! O ye men of pleasure, it is the very greatness of your nature which torments you: there is nothing save God capable of filling the immeasurable depths of your longing! How different the language of Klopstock, as already quoted: 'What recompense could I ask? I have tasted the cup of angels in singing of my Redeemer!'

One of the most dangerous, yet most brilliant among the novelists of the present day, says:

> 'Properly speaking, love is not a violent aspiration of every faculty toward a created being; it is rather a holy thirst of the most ethereal part of our being for the unknown. Tormented with intuitions of an eternal love, filled with torturing and insatiate desires for the infinite, we vainly seek their gratification in the dying forms which surround us, and obstinately adorn our perishable idols with that immaterial beauty which haunts our dreams. The emotions of the senses do not suffice us; in the treasure house of the simple joys of nature there is nothing sufficiently exquisite to fill our high demands; we would fain grasp heaven, and it is not within our reach. Then we seek it in a creature fallible as ourselves; we expend upon it all the high energies given us for far nobler ends. We refuse to worship God, and kneel before a worm like ourselves! But when the veil falls, when we see behind the clouds of incense and the halos woven by love, only a miserable and imperfect creature—we blush for our delusion, overturn our idol in our despair, and trample it rudely under foot. But as we must love, and will not give our hearts to God, for whom they were created, we seek another idol—and are again deceived! Through this bitter, bitter school we are purified and enlightened, until, abandoning all hope of finding perfection on earth, we are at last ready to offer God that pure, but now broken-hearted worship, which should never have been given save to Him alone.'—George Sand.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.