

exudes on the contrary the purest love of forms and of legality. Provided that the Indians remain in the savage state, the Americans do not interfere in their affairs and treat them as independent peoples; they do not permit themselves to occupy their lands without having duly acquired them by means of a contract; and if by chance an Indian nation can no longer live on its land, they take them fraternally by the hand and lead them to die far from the country of their forefathers.

[355] The Spanish, by means of unprecedented monstrosities, covering themselves with an indelible shame, were not able to succeed in exterminating the Indian race nor even in preventing them from sharing their rights. The Americans of the United States attained this double result with a marvelous facility, tranquilly, legally, philanthropically, without shedding blood, without violating a single one of the great principles of morality in the eyes of the world. It is not possible to destroy men while respecting better the laws of humanity.

The Position Occupied by the Black Race in the United States; The Dangers That Its Presence Presents to the Whites

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[356] The Indians will die as they have lived, in isolation; but the fate of the Negroes is in a way bound up with that of the Europeans. The two races are connected to each other, without thereby being mixed together; it is as difficult for them to separate completely as to unite.

The most fearsome of all the evils that threaten the future of the United States arises from the presence of the blacks on their soil. When one seeks the cause of the present troubles and the future dangers to the Union, one almost always arrives at this fundamental fact, no matter where one begins.

In general, men need to make great and continual efforts in order to create lasting evils. But there is one evil that penetrates into the world furtively. At first it is scarcely noticed amid the normal abuses of power; it begins with an individual whose name history does not preserve; it is deposited like an accursed seed in some spot of ground; then it nourishes itself on its own, spreads without effort, and grows naturally with the society that has accepted it. This evil is slavery.

Christianity had destroyed slavery; the Christians of the 16th century reestablished it. They never accepted it, however, save as an exception in their social system, and they took care to restrict it to a single one of the human races. They thus opened a wound in humanity that was less wide but infinitely more difficult to heal.

One must distinguish carefully between two things: slavery in itself and its consequences.

The immediate evils produced by slavery were more or less the same among the ancients as they are among the moderns, but the consequences of these evils were different. Among the ancients, the slave belonged to the same race as his master, and he was often superior to him in education and enlightenment.³¹ Liberty alone separated them; liberty being granted, they easily merged together.

The ancients thus had a very simple means of liberating themselves from slavery and its consequences; this means was manumission, and as [357] soon as they applied it in a general manner, they succeeded.

It is not that, in antiquity, the traces of servitude did not still subsist for a time after servitude was destroyed.

There is a natural prejudice that leads man to look down on the one who was his inferior, for a long time after the latter has become his equal; the real inequality produced by wealth or law is always succeeded by an imaginary inequality that has its roots in mores. But among the ancients, this secondary effect of slavery had a term. The freedman so strongly resembled those men who were born free that it soon became impossible to distinguish him in the midst of the others.

What was most difficult among the ancients was to modify the law. Among the moderns, it is to change the mores, and, for us, the real difficulty begins where that of antiquity ended.

The reason for this is that among the moderns the spiritual and transient fact of slavery is combined in the most lethal manner with the material and permanent fact of racial difference. The memory of slavery dishonors the race, and race perpetuates the memory of slavery.

No African arrived upon the shores of the New World of his own free will, from which it follows that all those that are found there today are slaves or freedmen. Thus, the Negro transmits to all his descendents, along with life, the external sign of his dishonor. The law can destroy servitude, but only God alone can obliterate its traces.

The modern slave differs from the master not only in his lack of liberty, but also in his origin. You can make the Negro free, but you cannot cause him not to be in the position of a foreigner vis-à-vis the European.

This is still not all: this man who is born in servility, this foreigner whom slavery has introduced among us, we barely recognize in him the general traits of humanity. His face appears hideous to us, his intelligence

31. It is known that several of the most celebrated authors of antiquity were or had been slaves: Aesop and Terence, for example. Slaves were not always taken from barbarian nations: war placed some very civilized men in slavery.

seems to us limited, his tastes are low. We almost take him for a being intermediary between brute and man.³²

The moderns, after having abolished slavery, thus still have to destroy three prejudices that are much more elusive and tenacious than slavery itself: the prejudice of the master, the prejudice of race, and finally the prejudice of the white.

[358] It is very difficult for us, who have had the good fortune to be born in the midst of men whom nature has made similar to us and the law has made our equals; it is very difficult for us, I say, to understand the unbridgeable gap that separates the American Negro from the European. But we can have a remote idea of it in reasoning by analogy.

We have in former times seen among us great inequalities that had their origins only in law. What is more fictitious than a purely legal inequality! What more contrary to the instinct of man than permanent differences established between obviously similar men! These differences nevertheless lasted for centuries; they still subsist in a thousand places; everywhere they have left traces that are imaginary but that time is barely able to efface. If the inequality created only by law is so hard to uproot, how can one destroy that which seems, in addition, to have immutable foundations in nature itself?

For myself, when I consider with what difficulty aristocratic bodies, of whatever nature, succeed in establishing themselves within the mass of the people, and the extreme care they take to conserve through centuries the ideational barriers* that separate themselves from them, I despair of seeing an aristocracy founded on visible and imperishable signs disappear.

Those who hope that the Europeans will one day merge with the Negroes thus seem to me to be entertaining a fantasy. My reason does not lead me to believe it, and I see nothing in the facts that suggests it to me.

To this point, everywhere the whites have been the stronger ones, they have held the Negroes in degradation or slavery. Everywhere the Negroes have been stronger, they have destroyed the whites. This is the only reckoning that has ever been made between the two races.

If I consider the United States today, I see well that, in some parts of the country, the legal barrier that separates the two races is tending to be lowered, but not that of mores: I see slavery retreat; the prejudice that it has brought into being is immobile.

32. In order for the whites to abandon the opinion they have conceived of the intellectual and moral inferiority of their former slaves, the Negroes would have to change, and they cannot change as long as this opinion subsists.

* *barrières idéales*: the barriers that are in the realm of ideas, that are purely intellectual.

In the part of the Union where the Negroes are no longer slaves, have they come closer to the whites? Any man who has lived in the United States will have noticed that the opposite occurred.

The prejudice of race appears to me stronger in the States that abolished slavery than in those where slavery still exists, and nowhere does it show itself to be as intolerant as in the States that have never known slavery.

It is true that in the northern part of the Union the law allows Negroes and whites to enter into legal marriages. But opinion declares the white who unites with a Negro woman disgraceful, and it would be very hard to give an example of such an occurrence.

In almost all the States where slavery is abolished, the Negroes have [359] been given electoral rights, but if they show up to vote, they risk their lives. If they are oppressed, they may complain, but only whites are to be found among the judges. The law opens the jurors' bench to him, but prejudice keeps him out of it. His son is excluded from the school where the descendent of Europeans comes to learn. In the theaters, he cannot, for the price of gold, buy the right to take his place beside his former master. In the hospitals, he sleeps separately. The black is allowed to pray to the same God as the whites, but not to pray to him at the same altar. He has his own clergy and his own churches. The doors of heaven are not closed to him: nevertheless, inequality hardly ceases at the border of the other world. When the Negro is no longer, his bones are cast aside, and the disparity of conditions persists even in the equality of death.

Thus the Negro is free, but he cannot share either the rights or the pleasures or the work or the sufferings or even the tomb of him whose equal he has been declared to be. There is no point at which they can touch, either in life or in death.

In the South, where slavery still exists, less care is taken to keep the Negroes apart; they sometimes share the work and the pleasures of the whites; one consents to mix with them up to a certain point; the law regarding them is harsher; the habits are more tolerant and milder.

In the South, the master does not fear raising his slave up to his level because he knows that he can always, if he wants to, throw him back down into the dust. In the North, the white man no longer sees clearly the barrier that ought to separate him from a debased race, and he distances himself from the Negro with all the more care as he fears that one day he may happen to merge with him.

Among the Americans of the South, nature, from time to time regaining its rights, succeeds for a moment in reestablishing equality between the whites and the blacks. In the North, pride silences even the most imperious passion of man. The American of the North would perhaps consent

to make of the Negro woman the temporary companion of his pleasures, if the legislators had declared that she must not aspire to share his bed; but she may become his wife, and he withdraws from her with a sort of horror.

It is in this way that in the United States the prejudice that rejects the Negroes seems to grow in proportion as the Negroes cease to be slaves and that inequality engraves itself in the mores as it disappears in the laws.

But if the relative position of the two races that inhabit the United States is as I have just shown, why have the Americans abolished slavery in the North of the Union, why do they maintain it in the South, and why do they increase its harshness there?

[360] It is easy to answer. It is not in the interest of the Negroes but in that of the whites that slavery is being destroyed in the United States.

The first Negroes were imported into Virginia around the year 1621. In America, as everywhere else on earth, servitude was thus born in the South. From there, it spread gradually; but as slavery worked its way north, the number of slaves decreased; there have always been very few Negroes in New England.

The colonies were founded; a century had by now elapsed, and an extraordinary fact began to strike everyone's eyes. The regions that possessed virtually no slaves grew in population, wealth, and well-being more rapidly than those that possessed them.

In the first, however, the inhabitant was obliged to cultivate the soil himself or to hire the services of another. In the second, he had at his disposition workers whose efforts he did not remunerate. There was therefore work and expenses on one side, leisure and economy on the other: nevertheless, the advantage remained with the first.

This result seems all the more difficult to explain since the emigrants, all belonging to the same European race, had the same habits, the same civilization, and the same laws, and differed only in barely perceptible nuances.

Time continued to march on: leaving behind the coast of the Atlantic Ocean, the Anglo-Americans penetrated every day further into the solitudes of the West; there they found new lands and new climates; they had to overcome obstacles of a diverse nature; their races mixed together, men of the South went up to the North, men of the North went down to the South. In the midst of all these causes, the same thing occurred at [361] each step; and, in general, the colony where there were no slaves became more populous and more prosperous than the one where slavery was in force.

As they advanced, one began, therefore, to see that servitude, so cruel to the slave, was fatal to the master.

But this truth received its final proof when one reached the banks of the Ohio.

The river to which the Indians had given the name par excellence of Ohio, or Beautiful River, waters one of the most magnificent valleys in which man has ever made his home. On both banks of the Ohio stretches rolling countryside where the soil offers every day inexhaustible treasures to the laborer. On both banks, the air is equally healthy and the climate temperate. Each of them forms the extreme frontier of a vast state: the one south of the river which follows the thousand bends that the Ohio makes in its course is called Kentucky; the other has borrowed its name from the river itself. The two states differ only in one respect: Kentucky has admitted slaves, the State of Ohio has refused to allow any of them within its borders.

The traveler who, placed in the middle of Ohio, allows himself to be carried by its current down to the mouth of the river in the Mississippi, thus sails, as it were, between liberty and servitude; and he only has to look around him in order to judge in an instant which is the more favorable for humanity.

On the southern bank of the river, the population is sparse; from time to time one sees a troop of slaves walking across half-deserted fields with a casual air; virgin forest constantly reappears; one would think that the society was asleep; man seems idle, and nature presents the image of activity and life.

On the northern bank, on the contrary, a confused hum proclaims in the distance the presence of industry; rich harvests cover the fields; elegant dwellings speak of the taste and care of the laborer; prosperity is visible everywhere; man appears wealthy and content: he works.

The State of Kentucky was founded in 1775, the State of Ohio came into being only twelve years later: twelve years in America is more than a half century in Europe. Today the population of Ohio already exceeds [362] that of Kentucky by 250,000 inhabitants.

These different effects of slavery and liberty are easy to understand; they suffice for explaining many of the differences that exist between ancient civilization and that of our day.

On the southern bank of the Ohio, work is mixed up with the idea of slavery; on the northern bank, with that of well-being and progress; there it is abased, here it is honored. On the southern bank of the river, one cannot find workers belonging to the white race; they are afraid of resembling the slaves. One must rely on the Negroes to take care of doing the work. On the northern bank, one would look in vain for an idler: the white man extends his activity and his intelligence to all his tasks.

In this way, therefore, the men who in Kentucky are responsible for exploiting the natural riches of the soil have neither zeal nor enlightenment, whereas those who might have these two things do nothing or pass into Ohio in order to make use of their industry and to be able to exercise it without shame.

It is true that in Kentucky the masters make the slaves work without being obliged to pay them, but they derive little profit from their efforts, whereas the money that they gave to free workers would be recouped with interest in the value of their work.

The free worker is paid, but he does his work more quickly than the slave, and rapidity of execution is one of the great elements of economy. The white sells his services, but they are purchased only when they are useful. The black cannot claim anything for the value of his services, but one is obliged to feed him at all times; he must be supported in his old age as well as in adulthood, in his unproductive childhood as well as during the fertile years of his youth, during sickness as well as in health. It is therefore only by paying that one obtains the work of these two men: the free worker receives a wage; the slave, an education, nourishment, care, clothes. The money that the master spends for the maintenance of the slave flows gradually and in small amounts; it is scarcely perceived. The wages given to the worker are given in a lump sum, and it seems to enrich him who receives it, but in reality the slave has cost more than the free man, and his work has been less productive.

[363] The influence of slavery extends even further. It penetrates even into the soul itself of the master and gives a particular direction to his ideas and tastes.

On the two banks of the Ohio, nature has given to man an enterprising and energetic character; but on each side of the river he makes a different use of this common quality.

The white man of the northern bank, obliged to live by his own efforts, has made material well-being the principal aim of his life; and since the country he inhabits offers inexhaustible resources to his industry and offers never ending lures to his activity, his ardor to acquire has exceeded the normal limits of human cupidity: tormented by the desire for wealth, one sees him boldly enter all the paths that fortune opens up to him; he is equally liable to become a sailor, pioneer, manufacturer, or farmer, bearing the work or the dangers attached to these different occupations with an unchanging steadfastness. There is something wonderful in the resourcefulness of his nature and a sort of heroism in his enthusiasm for gain.

The American of the southern bank disdains not only work, but all the enterprises that work causes to succeed. Living in idle comfort, he

has the tastes of idle men. Money has lost a portion of its worth in his eyes; he pursues not so much fortune as excitement* and pleasure, and he brings to this side of things the energy that his neighbor deploys elsewhere. He loves hunting and war with a passion; he takes pleasure in the most violent bodily exercises; he is familiar with the use of arms, and from his childhood he has learned to risk his life in individual combat. Slavery thus not only prevents the whites from making their fortune, it turns them away from wishing to do so.

The same causes, acting continually for two centuries in opposite directions in the English colonies of North America, have ended up creating an enormous gap between the commercial capability of the Southerner and that of the Northerner. Today, it is only the North that possesses ships, factories, railroads, and canals.

This gap is noticeable not only in comparing the North and the South, [364] but in comparing the inhabitants of the South to one another. Almost all the men in the southernmost states of the Union who engage in commercial enterprises and seek to profit from slavery have come from the North. Every day, Northerners spread into this part of the American territory where they have less competition to fear. They discover resources there that the inhabitants have not noticed, and in adapting themselves to a system of which they disapprove, they succeed in getting more profit out of it than those who founded it and still support it.

Were I inclined to press the parallel further, I could easily show that almost all the differences that are visible between the character of Southern and Northern Americans have their origin in slavery. But that would be to go beyond my subject: at this point I am not investigating all the effects of slavery, but what effects it produces on the material prosperity of those who have accepted it.

This influence of slavery on the production of wealth could only have been imperfectly understood in antiquity. Slavery then existed throughout the civilized world, and the peoples who were not familiar with it were barbarians.

In consequence, Christianity destroyed slavery only by asserting the rights of the slave. In our time one may attack it in the name of the master: on this point, interest and morality are in accord.

As these truths became manifest in the United States, one saw slavery gradually retreat before the enlightenment born of experience.

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* The word translated as "excitement" is *agitation*. *Agitation* can also mean "restlessness" or "turbulence"; and, politically, "unrest."

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By leaving the Negro in slavery, he can be kept in a state akin to that of a brute; free, he cannot be prevented from learning enough to appreciate the extent of his afflictions and to glimpse their remedy. There is, in addition, a singular principle of relative justice that is very deeply embedded in the human heart. Men are struck much more by inequality that exists within a single class than by inequalities that are visible between the different classes. One understands slavery; but how to conceive of the existence of several million citizens forever bent beneath disgrace and abandoned to hereditary wretchedness? In the North, a population of freed Negroes experiences these afflictions and feels these injustices, but it is weak and small; in the South, it would be numerous and strong.

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From the moment that one admits that the whites and the emancipated Negroes are placed on the same soil as peoples who are foreign to one another, one will easily understand that there are only two possibilities for the future: the Negroes and the whites must either merge together completely or separate.

I have already expressed above my belief regarding the first possibility. I do not think that the white race and the black race will succeed in living anywhere on a footing of equality.

But I think that the difficulty will be even greater in the United States than anywhere else. One man may put himself outside of the prejudices of religion, of country, or of race, and if this man is king, he may effect surprising changes in the society: an entire people cannot in this way put itself, as it were, above itself.

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I confess that when I consider the South, I see only two ways of acting for the white race that inhabits these regions: to free the Negroes and merge them with itself, or to remain isolated from them and keep them in slavery as long as possible. The intermediate solutions seem to me to soon lead to the most horrible of all civil wars and perhaps to the ruin of one of the two races.

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The Americans of the South see the matter in this way, and they act accordingly. Not wishing to merge with the Negroes, they refuse to set them free.

It is not that all the inhabitants of the South regard slavery as necessary to the wealth of the master. On this point, many of them are in agreement with the Northerners and readily admit with the latter that slavery is an evil; but they think that it is necessary to maintain this evil in order to live.

Enlightenment, in increasing in the South, has made the inhabitants in this part of the country see that slavery is harmful to the master, and this same enlightenment shows them, more clearly than they had seen up until then, the near impossibility of abolishing it. From this a remarkable contrast results: slavery is increasingly embedded in the laws, even as its utility is more in dispute; and while its principle is gradually being abolished in the North, in the South increasingly harsh conclusions are being drawn from this same principle.

The legislation of the southern States relative to the slaves presents today a kind of unprecedented atrocity, which by itself shows some profound disturbance in the laws of humanity. It suffices to read the legislation of the southern States in order to judge the desperate position of the two races that inhabit them.

It is not that the Americans of this part of the Union have exactly increased the severity of slavery; on the contrary, they have eased the material condition of the slaves. The ancients knew only about shackles and death for maintaining slavery; the Americans of the South of the Union have discovered more intellectual guarantees for the perpetuation of their power. They have, if I may express myself thus, spiritualized despotism and violence. In antiquity, one sought to prevent the slave from breaking his shackles; in our day, one has tried to deprive him of the desire to do so.

The ancients enchained the body of the slave, but they left his spirit free and permitted him to acquire learning. In that, they were consistent with themselves; there was at that time a natural end to servitude: one day or other the slave might become free and equal to his master.

The Americans of the South, who do not think that the Negroes can ever merge with them, have forbidden them, under severe penalties, to be taught to read and write. Not wishing to raise them to their level, they keep them as close as possible to the brutes.

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From the moment that the Europeans took their slaves from a race of men different from their own, one that many among them viewed as inferior to the other human races and with which all of them viewed the idea of ever assimilating with horror, they have supposed slavery to be permanent. For between the extreme inequality that slavery creates and the complete equality that independence naturally produces among men, there is no intermediate state that is durable. The Europeans have vaguely sensed this truth, but without admitting it. Every time the question

involves the Negroes, one sees them obey sometimes their interest or pride, sometimes their pity. They have violated all the rights of humanity toward the black man, and then they have taught him the worth and inviolability of these rights. They opened their ranks to their slaves, and when the latter tried to enter them, they ignominiously drove them out. Wanting slavery, they have allowed themselves to be drawn, despite themselves or without their being aware of it, toward liberty, without having the courage to be either completely unjust or completely just.

[379] If it is impossible to anticipate a time when the Americans of the South will mix their blood with that of the Negroes, can they, without running the risk of perishing, allow the latter to become free? And if they are obliged, in order to save their own race, to try to keep them in shackles, must they not be excused for choosing the most effective means for succeeding in doing so?

What is occurring in the South of the Union seems to me to be at once the most horrible and the most natural consequence of slavery. When I see the order of nature overturned, when I hear humanity crying out and struggling in vain under the laws, I confess that I do not find in myself the indignation to denounce the men of our day who are responsible for these outrages, but I concentrate all my hatred against those who, after more than a thousand years of equality, have introduced slavery once again into the world.

Besides, whatever the efforts of the Americans of the South to conserve slavery, they will not succeed forever. Slavery, narrowed to a single point on the globe, attacked by Christianity as unjust, by political economy as disastrous; slavery, in the midst of the democratic liberty and enlightenment of our age, is not an institution that can last. It will end by the act of the slave or by that of the master. In both cases, great misfortunes must be expected.

If liberty is refused to the Negroes of the South, they will end by seizing it themselves violently. If it is granted to them, they will not be long in abusing it.

[380] **What Are the Chances of Survival of the
American Union? What Dangers Threaten It?**

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The men who inhabit the immense territory of the United States are almost all the issue of a common stock, but over time the climate and above all slavery have introduced marked differences between the char-

acter of the English of the South of the United States and the character of the English of the North.

It is generally believed among us that slavery gives to one part of the Union interests opposed to those of the other. I have never noticed that to be the case. Slavery in the South has not created interests opposed to those of the North, but it has modified the character of the inhabitants of the South and given them different habits.

I have described elsewhere what influence slavery had exercised on the commercial aptitude of the Americans of the South; this same influence also extends to their mores.

The slave is a servant who does not argue and submits to everything without a murmur. Sometimes he murders his master, but he never resists him. In the South there are no families so poor that they do not have slaves. The American of the South, from his birth, finds himself invested with a sort of domestic dictatorship; the first notions that he receives about life announce to him that he is born to command, and the first habit that he acquires is that of easily dominating. Education thus tends powerfully to make of the southern American a man haughty, rash, irascible, violent, ardent in his desires, impatient of obstacles, but easy to discourage if he cannot triumph at the first try. [392]

The American of the North sees no slaves running around his cradle. He does not even encounter free servants because most often he is constrained to provide for his own needs by himself. Scarcely is he in the world when the idea of necessity comes from all directions to present itself to his mind. He thus learns early to recognize exactly, through his own efforts, the natural limit to his power; he does not expect to bend by force the wills that are opposed to his own, and he knows that in order to obtain the aid of his fellow men, he must above all win their good will. He is therefore patient, thoughtful, tolerant, slow to act, and persevering in his goals.

In the southern States, the most pressing needs of man are always satisfied. Thus the southern American is not preoccupied by the material cares of life; another is responsible for thinking about them for him. Free on this point, his imagination is directed toward other, greater, and less precisely defined objects. The southern American loves above all grandeur, luxury, glory, éclat,* pleasures, idleness. Nothing constrains him to make efforts in order to live, and since he has no necessary work, he falls into a slumber and does not even attempt anything useful.

* *le bruit*. See the note on *bruit* at [66].