

37 Tobin Street, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Christmas Eve 1900

Dear Pratt,

Private!
Christmas greetings, ^{and} Congratulations -

There are few men in the U.S. who have had the experiences with semi-barbarous races, ^{and} in this class I place the negro, that you have had, ^{and} none I am sure in the "North" States so bold, in the expression of honest convictions. But having known you in the days that tried your very soul's integrity - in the experimental stage of your present pursuits - when the War Dept., Army Officers, ^{and} Post Traders were all after your scalp: - when, sick at heart, ^{and} almost in despair, you turned for sympathy to a "poor old rebel", I came to the conclusion, that you were honest, patient, long-suffering, conscientious ^{and} indefatigable - Further that you were a just man, ^{and} so humane that the success of your experiment in civilizing the Indians was assured from the first. So you & to you only is the success of Indian education in the U.S. rightly due, ^{and} years after you are dead perhaps some Encyclopaedia Americana, will rank you with the apostle Elliot - I have read your letter in Phil. Record, (20th Dec) to Dr. Francis H. Hill of the A. M. E. Church, ^{and} it is upon this that I extend congratulations. I was inform^d that M^{rs} Harriet Beecher Stowe, after coming in contact with the negro upon his native heath, (in Fla. you know she had an orange grove at Mandarin, on S^t John's river), found George, Emmeline, Aunt Chloe ^{and} even Uncle Tom in the flesh very different from the characters she had in her ignorance created - repented of having written Uncle Tom's Cabin, but did not have the courage to recite in public like you mea culpa. While on this subject let me quote an amusing piece of satire from the pen of Agnes Repplier, of Phil^a. - "Docks that have hindered me - ^{Point of View}"

x x x x x The last work ^{has} me seriously as a girl, & to root it -

good seed sown in long years of righteous education, was Uncle Tom's Cabin, which I read from cover to cover with the innocent credulity of youth; & when I had finished, the awful conviction forced itself upon me that the X 111 Amendment was a ghastly error, & that the war had been fought in vain - Slavery, which had seemed to me before to have been, undeviatingly wicked, now shone in a new & alluring light. All things must be judged by their results, & if the result of slavery was to produce a race so infinitely superior to common humanity; if it bred strong, capable, self-reliant men like George, beautiful, courageous, tender-hearted women like Eliza, visions of innocent loveliness like Emmeline; marvels of accurate intelligence like Cassy, children of surpassing precocity & charm like Little Harry, mothers & wives of patient, simple goodness like Aunt Chloe, & finally, models of all known chivalry & virtue like Uncle Tom himself, - then slavery was the most ennobling institution in the world, & we had committed a grievous crime in degrading a whole heroic race to our narrower, viler level - &c. &c. See page 77 & seq. However Mrs Stowe had a purpose in writing Uncle Tom's Cabin, & perhaps, believing that the end justifies the means, justified her libel from Romans Ch. III, v. 7. She knew absolutely nothing of the institution of Slavery as it existed in ante-bellum times, & like yourself, completely mistook the genius of it. At least one expression in your letter leads me to infer this - you say - "Slavery took care of the lives of the black people, because every little black fellow as soon as born was dollars to master & missus, & his living & health were matters of concern, but the Indian had no value" - Was there no human kindness existing between the two races in the South? Was blood interest the only moving impulse? To understand what slavery was in the South, & to properly appreciate the relations between Master, & slave & the family & the slave, it is necessary that one should have been to the manner born - South? Slavery

+ So has a litter of pigs, a new-born colt or calf

was unique, ^{and} it is absolutely impossible to explain what it was -
 South? Slaveholders were not all paragons of virtue, or more humane than
 other classes of citizens, but that they were brutal ^{and} unfeeling in the
 treatment of their slaves can safely be denied, ^{and} proved by what occurred
 during the war. To replenish the armies of the Confederacy the most rigid
 enforcement of a drastic Conscription almost robbed the cradle & the grave,
^{and} left the plantations & farms in almost sole charge of our women -
 or I may say, ^{and} with a loving tribute to their fidelity, I do say it, the
 women & children were left in the care & protection of the negroes. In
 the terribly disorganized condition of affairs, half-fed, scantily clothed,
^{and} incited by every means to rise up & strike for liberty; with every
 chance ^{of success} in their favor, yet during the whole war there was not the
 least sign of discontent, or trouble among them. The Southern negro
 of those days was as loyal to the South as any Confederate Soldier
in the field, ^{and} the debt of gratitude which the South owes to her slaves
 she can never repay. Southerners of the "Old South" never refused to
 ack. this debt, ^{and} if, after the war, the two races had been left alone
 the chang^d conditions wd. have soon righted themselves - but - Recon-
 struction, with all of its hellish malignancy, estranged the two races,
^{and} since then a new generation of whites, ^{and} a new generation of
 negroes, have been born. The former, born under totally different
 conditions from their fathers, cannot realize the forbearing kindness
 which regulated the intercourse between the ^{old} Southerner & the negro, ^{and}
 from the sterner necessities of the times in which they live, ^{and} their
 ambition to accumulate money, they cannot afford to overlook
 the peccadilloes of the inferior race as was done in the old times -
 Hence there is less sympathy between the young Southerner, ^{and} the ne-
 gro to day than there ever was before, & I greatly fear the breach is wi-
 dening - The present generation of negroes, born in freedom, have lost

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the disciplinary influence of the old slavery days; have been pillaged by Yankee & Jew, ^{and} utterly demoralized by a false system of education. They have been encouraged, while enjoying full legal rights, to insist upon social equality, which by its very nature can never be regulated by law, ^{and} in every way to antagonize the situation. The old leaven of slavery is no longer a conservative factor among them, ^{and} with the passing of the Southern man ^{and} the negro of the old days I look for the coming of critical days for the South - ^{and} the U.S.

On the same lines of your argument, as to the effect of Slavery upon the negro, allow me to quote from a speech delivered by Col. Rich^d. Henry Lee, C.S.A., (nephew of Marse. Rob), at the dedication of a Confederate monument at Old Chapel, Clarke Co. Va. in 1894.

xxx "Human institutions have their uses & their limitations. They are the scaffolding to the building, a means to an end. Although African slavery was not the cause, it was the occasion of our war. It was useful & valuable in its day. It lifted a people, who, in the land of their nativity, were savages, out of barbarism & animalism to such a plane of Christian civilization as to qualify them, in the judgment of the conquerors of the South, to participate in the government of the great republic. What a tribute to the much-abused South! What a monument to South!" Christian men & women. Match me if you can out of the record of missions subsequent to the days of the apostles ^{and} the early teachers of Christianity any work among the heathen that can compare with it in results, when viewed from the standpoint of those who have given the African the ballot" xxx

It is quite the fashion, in the hypocritical cant of the times, to assert, with no attempt at proof, that Slavery was demoralizing to the Master.

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Theoretically it wd. seem that this ought to be true, but my observations of social conditions in both Northern & Southern States force me to take the negative side of the proposition, & to deny that the representative of the old slave regime was inferior in morals, intellect or honesty to the Northern man of his day, or to any man of any nation on earth. As to Southⁿ public men let me quote from Blaine's "20 years in Congress" (Vol. 1 ch. 3 - page 45) x x x Those leaders constituted a remarkable body of men. Having before them the example of Jefferson, of Madison, & of Geo. Mason of Va, of Nathaniel Macon in N.C. & of the Pinckneys & Rutledges in S.C., they gave deep study to the science of gov^t. They were admirably trained as debaters, & they became highly skilled in the management of parliamentary bodies. As a rule they were liberally educated, many of them graduates of Northⁿ colleges, a still larger number taking their degrees at Transylvania in Ky. at Chapel Hill in N.C. & at Mr. Jefferson's peculiar but admirable institution in Va. Their secluded mode of life on the plantation gave them leisure for reading & reflection. They took pride in their libraries, pursued the law so far as it increased their equipment for a public career, & devoted themselves to political affairs with an absorbing ambition. Their domestic relations imparted manners that were haughty & sometimes offensive; they were quick to take affront, & they not infrequently brought needless personal disputation into the discussion of public questions; but they were almost without exception, men of high integrity & they were especially & jealously careful of the public money. Too often recklessly lavish in their personal expenditures, they believed in an economical government, & throughout the long period of their domination they guarded the Treasury with rigid & unceasing vigilance against every attempt at extravagance, & against every form of corruption. x x —

James G. Blaine loved not the Southerner, yet this is the eulogy he pronounces upon this product of the "Sum of all villainies" — But hear what old brother Hoar (Senator from the home of Wendell Phillips & Charles Sumner) has to say in this regard — Speaking before a Boston audience April 20th 1899 of Southern character —

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He said it possessed some desirable traits in a higher degree than does that of the North. Among them were the love of Liberty, Home & Kindred, Self-sacrificing Heroism in war & peace, ^{and} a matchless constancy unequalled anywhere else on earth. He said that "during the last 30 years he has had many bitter contentions with Southⁿ Statesmen, but he could say for them that he never knew one who did not possess the most uncorruptible honesty - more than he could say for men from every section." I could go on ^{for} out of the mouths of hostile witnesses disprove the assertion that Slavery was demoralizing to the Southⁿ master, but an institution that could produce a Calhoun, who Lord Brougham pronounced "the greatest statesman in the world - not such an orator as Henry Clay, but as far above him as the great orb of heaven is above the glow-worm - in purity resembling Washington; in intellect Jefferson" - both likewise Southerners & Slaveholders - , needs no defence against such a label. Now, my dear Bratt, while you have nothing to regret in having fought for the freedom of the negro from April '61 to May '65, (I tho^t it was for the Union (?)), I likewise have nothing to regret for having fought from Feb'y '61 to May '65 in defence of rights guaranteed by that Constitution, which is now being so critically tried in the Supreme Court at Washington.

In bidding farewell to his confidants of the Senate upon the secession of his State. in 1860 Senator Hammond of S. C., ~~and~~ in reply to the boast of W. H. Seward that the North was about to take control at Washington, said - "Do not forget - it can never be forgotten - it is written on the brightest page of human history - that we, the Slaveholders of the South, took our country in her infancy, ^{and}, after ruling her for 60 out of 70 years of her existence, we shall surrender her to you without a stain upon her honor, boundless in prosperity, incalculable in her strength, the wonder & admiration of the world. Time will show what you will make of her; but no time can diminish our glory, or your responsibility - ^{The Southerners} ^{undivided} ostracized from the government, the North has now had ^{undivided} control for less than half a century ^{and} the vital question is, have we reached the parting of the ways between an Empire & a Republic?"

You know Macchiavelli says the way to ruin a republic is to engage it in foreign enterprises, ^{and} if Messrs. McKim, Dewey, Mark Hanna, ^{and} their Trust. money-mongering backers, have not done this then I cannot read the signs of the times. Unless the Supreme Court applies the brake in the cases now before it, then the future of the republic is dark indeed. But even should the Supreme Court prove subservient to the Expansionists, I still trust to what Matthew Arnold calls the "small remnant within", who, in the last resort, will be found virtuous enough not to permit another Oliver Cromwell to throttle the liberties of America. In this connection, & as I am at present dealing in pessimisms, please read, ^{and} return to me ^{of} Lord Macanlay's letter enclosed -

It would seem that I have wandered far from the subject matter of your letter, but the starting point of all these present ~~argu~~ ^{was} the unwarrantable interference with Slavery in the first instance, ^{and} which, as a factor in Christⁿ Civilization, you, a professed original abolitionist, consider as not ^{to have been} such a bad thing after all. Now I, the son of three generations of Slaveholders, like yourself, would not on any account see Slavery restored, if such a thing were possible, not that I love the negro less but the white man more, ^{and} for the present lamentable condition of the negro in the South, I hold the Northⁿ people wholly responsible; ^{and} towards their wards they have acted quite as meanly as the U. S. Gov^t has towards the Indian. They enfranchised an innate Savage, ^{and} afflicted the curse upon a ruined people ^{and} a ravaged country, ^{and} what ^{aid} ~~help~~ they have sporadically given to help improve his condition has been but contemptible in amount. All countries have, sooner or later, been called to their reckoning ^{and} the equal law of retribution applies as well to nations as to individuals. Can it be that Nemesis has so soon caught up with the U. S.? That the country is to suffer for its treatment of the Indian & the negro I firmly believe, but history has shown us that so far as Nations are concerned the mills of God have ground ^{more} slowly. Now England is undoubtedly, as an empire, in the throes of dissolution, ^{and} if her boasted Navy shd.

more as contemptible as he army has then the complete ruin of that country cannot be far off.

As bearing upon the question I send you for perusal, requesting its return, a pamphlet by the Rev. Mr. Campbell of Asherille, N.C. I have annotated it but perhaps my notes will not detract from the text. It was my intention when I began this rambling letter to have asked you some questions about your Indians, but these I shall defer until I again have the pleasure of writing to you - if you should favor me with a reply to this.

I trust that you are enjoying good health, &c.

Wishing you a Merry Christmas
Yours Very truly,
R. F. Armstrong—