

## CHAPTER IX.

## CONCLUSION.

THESE facts, then, have been established beyond question: That slavery was forced upon Virginia against her protests, by the cupidity of New England, and the tyranny and cupidity of Old England: That the African race being thus placed in the State without her agency, she adopted the remedy of domestic slavery, which is proved by the law of God in the Old and New Testaments to be innocent, and shown by events to be beneficent to the Africans: That, according to history, the laws of nations, and the laws of the British Empire inherited by the American States, slaveholding was lawful throughout the territories of the United States, save where it was restrained by State sovereignty: That it was expressly recognized and protected by the Constitution; such recognition having been an essential condition, without which the Southern States would never have accepted the Union: That every department of the government, and all political parties, habitually recognized the political equality of the slaveholding States, and of slaveholding citizens: That the Supreme Court, the authorized expounder of the Constitution, also recognized the equal rights of slaveholders in all the common territories:

And that slavery proved itself at once, not only lawful, but eminently promotive of the well-being of the Africans, of the interests of the whole government, and of the publick wealth. Then the North, having ceased to find its own interest in the slave trade and slavery, changed its ground, and began to cast about, merely from a desire of sectional power in the confederacy, for means to destroy the institution. It is unnecessary to argue that the whole free-soil controversy, and the war which grew out of it, were really designed by them to destroy slavery in the States: for they themselves, in the pride of success, have long ceased to conceal that fact.

Now, had slavery been intrinsically a moral and social evil, yet its protection was in the compact between the States; and to the honest mind, there was but one course for the North to adopt when she concluded that she could no longer endure her connexion with slavery. This was, to restore to the South the pledges, the fulfilment of which had become irksome; and to dissolve the Union peacefully and fairly, as it had been formed, leaving us in possession of our own country and rights, to bear our own sin, and pursue our own destiny. It was the federal compact alone, which gave the North any right to govern the South. If they repudiated that contract, it was annihilated equally for both parties. Thenceforward their claim to legislate for the South, or exercise any power over her, was baseless and iniquitous. No fair mind will dispute, that even though slavery had been an indefensible wrong, the South ought not to have permitted herself to be assailed for it, in an equal Union which

she had sovereignly entered with this institution expressly recognized. But that basis of argument we utterly repudiate. We will not defend ourselves from such premises. We claim to have been justified, not only by the Constitution of the United States, but by God and the right, in our rights to slaves. Our *status* in the Federal Union was, so far, as equal, as honourable, as legal, as free from ethical taint, as that of any other States with their property in horses, ships, land, and factories.

We have, in another place, (the Life of Jackson,) stated with sufficient fulness, the admitted facts and doctrines of the Constitution, which justified the Southern States in resuming their independence, when the compact, to which they had partially yielded it, was destroyed. The indisputable proofs (now fully admitted by anti-slavery men) might be cited, which showed that their election of a sectional President, with other aggressions, were intended to destroy the most acknowledged and vital rights of the States. Had Virginia assumed her attitude of resistance upon that event, she might have defended it by that maxim, so obvious to every just mind, that it is righteous and wise to meet the first clear aggression, even though its practical mischiefs be unimportant: that "a people should rather contend for their rights upon their threshold than upon their hearthstone." But we had stronger justification still. The aggression intended was practically vast and ruinous in its results. It has been shown in previous chapters, that the destruction of African slavery among us was vital to us, because emancipation by such means would be destructive of

the very framework of society, and of our most fundamental rights and interests. All our statesmen, of all parties, had taught us, not only that the reserved rights of the States were the bulwarks of the liberties of the people, but that emancipation by federal aggression would lead to the destruction of all other rights. A Clay, as much as a Calhoun, proclaimed that when abolition overthrew slavery in the South, it also would equally overthrow the Constitution. Calhoun, and other Southern statesmen, with a sagacity which every day confirms, had forewarned us, that when once abolition by federal aggression came, these other sure results would follow: that the same greedy lust of power which had meddled between masters and slaves, would assuredly, and for the stronger reason, desire to use the political weight of the late slaves against their late masters: that having enforced a violent emancipation, they would enforce, of course, negro suffrage, negro eligibility to office, and a full negro equality: that negro equality thus theoretically established would be practical negro superiority: that the tyrant section, as it gave to its victims, the white men of the South, more and more causes of just resentment, would find more and more violent inducements to bribe the negroes, with additional privileges and gifts, to assist them in their domination: that this miserable career must result in one of two things, either a war of races, in which the whites or the blacks would be, one or the other, exterminated; or amalgamation. But while we believe that "God made of one blood all nations of men to dwell under the whole heavens," we know that the African has become, according to a well-known

law of natural history, by the manifold influences of the ages, a different, fixed *species* of the race, separated from the white man by traits bodily, mental and moral, almost as rigid and permanent as those of *genus*. Hence the offspring of an amalgamation must be a hybrid race, stamped with all the feebleness of the hybrid, and incapable of the career of civilization and glory as an independent race. And this apparently is the destiny which our conquerors have in view. If indeed they can mix the blood of the heroes of Manassas with this vile stream from the fens of Africa, then they will never again have occasion to tremble before the righteous resistance of Virginian freemen; but will have a race supple and vile enough to fill that position of political subjection, which they desire to fix on the South.

But although Virginia well knew that the very existence of society was assailed by these aggressions, so strict was her loyalty to the Constitution, she refused to make the election of a sectional President the immediate occasion of resistance, because, outrage as it was, it was nominally effected by the forms of the Constitution. When her sisters, more advanced than herself in the spirit of resistance, resumed their independence, she refused to follow them. When, warned by thickening events, she assembled her Convention, immediate embodiment of her own sovereignty, it was not a convention of secessionists. Only twenty-five, out of the hundreds of members, advocated that extreme remedy. But she did by this Convention, what she had already done by her General Assembly: she repeated the assertion of the great principles on which the government

was founded ; that it was built on the free consent of States originally sovereign, and not on force ; that however wrongfully any State might resume its independence without just cause, the only remedy was conciliation, and not force ; that therefore the coercion of a sovereign State was unlawful, mischievous, and must be resisted. There Virginia took her stand—on this foundation right, as essential to the well-being of assailant as of assailed. It was not for slavery that she deliberately resolved to draw the sword, cardinal as she knew circumstances had rendered slavery at this time ; but for this corner-stone of all constitutional liberty, North and South. And this, too, was a principle which she had always held against all assailants, in all ages of the Republick. She had asserted it firmly against her own favourite, Andrew Jackson, in the case of South Carolina, notwithstanding her disapproval of the nullifying doctrine then held by that State. She only asserted her time-honoured creed now. It was not until the claim to subjugate sovereign States was practically applied, that Virginia drew the sword ; and then, not for slavery, but for the Constitution, and the liberties of a continent, which it had protected.

It is therefore a great and an odious perversion of the truth, to say that the defensive movement of the South was a war to extend and perpetuate slavery. African slavery was not the *cause*, but the *occasion* of the strife, on either side. On the Northern side it was merely the pretext, employed by that aggressive section to carry out ambitious projects of domination. To the South, it was merely the circumstance of the controversy, that the right assailed was our right to the

labour of our servants. It was not the circumstance for which we contended, but the principle—the great cause of moral right, justice, and regulated liberty. It was therefore a gross injustice to burden our cause, in the minds of the rest of the world, with the *odium* which the prejudices of Christendom have attached to the name of slaveholder. Even those who are unable to overcome those prejudices, would, if just and magnanimous, approve our attempt to defend ourselves.

Finally: the means by which this defence has been overpowered were as iniquitous as the attack. A war was waged, precipitated by treachery, aggravated by every measure of barbarity condemned by the laws of nations, by the agency of multitudinous hordes of foreign mercenaries, and semi-civilized slaves seduced from their owners; against captives, women, children, and private property; with the attempt to let loose upon our little community (which they found otherwise unconquerable) a servile insurrection and all the horrors of domestic assassination—an attempt disappointed only by the good feeling and good character which the servants themselves had learned from the humanity of their masters. The impartial and magnanimous mind which weighs these facts cannot but feel itself swelling with an unutterable sense of indignation. The Southern people feel little impulse to give expression to their sense of the enormous wrongs, in reproaches or vituperations of those who have thus destroyed them. When resistance was practicable, they gave a more expressive and seemly utterance to this sentiment, in the energy of their blows. Let the heroick spirit in which the soldiers of Virginia and the South struck for their

X liberties, and suffered, and died, represent our appreciation of this injustice. A righteous God, for our sins towards Him, has permitted us to be overthrown by our enemies and His. It is vain to complain in the ear of a maddening tempest. Although our people are now oppressed with present sufferings and a prospective destiny more cruel and disastrous than has been visited on any civilized people of modern ages, they suffer silently, disdaining to complain, and only raising to the chastening heavens, the cry, "How long, O Lord?" Their appeal is to history, and to Him. They well know, that in due time, they, although powerless themselves, will be avenged through the same disorganizing heresies under which they now suffer, and through the anarchy and woes which they will bring upon the North. Meantime, let the arrogant and successful wrongdoers flout our defence with disdain: we will meet them with it again, when it will be heard; in the day of their calamity, in the pages of impartial history, and in the Day of Judgment.