

P R E F A C E.

To the conquerors of my native State, and perhaps to some of her sons, a large part of the following defence will appear wholly unseasonable. A discussion of a social order totally overthrown, and never to be restored here, will appear as completely out of date to them as the ribs of Noah's ark, bleaching amidst the eternal snows of Ararat, to his posterity, when engaged in building the Tower of Babel. Let me distinctly premise, that I do not dream of affecting the perverted judgments of the great anti-slavery party which now rules the hour. Of course, a set of people who make success the test of truth, as they avowedly do in this matter, and who have been busily and triumphantly engaged for so many years in perfecting a plain injustice, to which they had deliberately made up their minds, are not within the reach of reasoning. Nothing but the hand of a retributive Providence can avail to reach them. The few among them who do not pass me by with silent neglect, I am well aware will content themselves with scolding; they will not venture a rational reply.

But my purpose in the following pages is, first and chiefly, to lay this pious and filial defence upon the tomb of my murdered mother, Virginia. Her detractors, after

committing the crime of destroying a sovereign and co-equal commonwealth, seek also to bury her memory under a load of obloquy and falsehood. The last and only office that remains to her sons is to leave their testimony for her righteous fame—feeble it may be now, amidst the din of passion and material power, yet inextinguishable as Truth's own torch. History will some day bring present events before her impartial bar; and then her ministers will recall my obscure little book, and will recognize in it the words of truth and righteousness, attested by the signatures of time and events.

Again: if there is indeed any future for civilized government in what were the United States, the refutation of the abolitionist postulates must possess a living interest still. Men ask, "Is not the slavery question dead? Why discuss it longer?" I reply: Would God it were dead! Would that its mischievous principles were as completely a thing of the past as our rights in the Union in this particular are! But in the Church, abolitionism lives, and is more rampant and mischievous than ever, as infidelity; for this is its true nature. Therefore the faithful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ dare not cease to oppose and unmask it. And in the State, abolitionism still lives in its full activity, as Jacobinism; a fell spirit which is the destroyer of every hope of just government and Christian order. Hence, the enlightened patriot cannot cease to contend with it, until he has accepted; in his hopelessness, the *nefas de republica desperandi*. Whether wise and good men deem that this discussion is antiquated, may be judged from the fact that Bishop Hopkins (one of the most revered divines among Episcopalians) judged it proper, in 1864, and Dr. Stuart Rob-

inson, of Louisville, (equally esteemed among Presbyterians,) in 1865, to put forth new and able arguments upon this question.

It should be added, in explanation, that, as a son of Virginia, I have naturally taken her, the oldest and greatest of the slaveholding States, as a representative. I was most familiar with her laws. In defending her, I have virtually defended the whole South, of which she was the type; for the differences between her slave institutions and theirs were in no respect essential.

The most fearful consequence of the despotic government to which the South is now subjected, is not the plundering of our goods, nor the abridgment of privileges, nor the death of innocent men, but the degrading and debauching of the moral sensibilities and principles of the helpless victims. The weapon of arbitrary rulers is physical force; the shield of its victims is usually evasion and duplicity. Again: few minds and consciences have that stable independence which remains erect and undebauched amidst the disappointments, anguish, and losses of defeat, and the desertion of numbers, and the obloquy of a lost cause. Hence it has usually been found, in the history of subjugated nations, that they receive at the hands of their conquerors this crowning woe—a depraved, cringing, and cowardly spirit. The wisest, kindest, most patriotic thing which any man can do for his country, amidst such calamities, is to aid in preserving and reinstating the tottering principles of his countrymen; to teach them, while they give place to inexorable force, to abate nothing of righteous convictions and of self-respect. And in this work he is as really a benefactor of the conquerors as

of the conquered. For thus he aids in preserving that precious seed of men, who are men of principle, and not of expediency; who alone (if any can) are able to reconstruct society, after the tumult of faction shall have spent its rage, upon the foundations of truth and justice. The men at the North who have stood firmly aloof from the errors and crimes of this revolution, and the men at the South who have not been unmanned and debauched by defeat—these are the men whom Providence will call forth from their seclusion, when the fury of fanaticism shall have done its worst, to repair its mischiefs, and save America from chronic anarchy and barbarism; if, indeed, any rescue is designed for us. It is this audience, "few but fit," with which I would chiefly commune. They will appreciate this humble effort to justify the history of our native States, and to sustain the hearts of their sons in the hour of cruel reproach.

Hampden Sidney, Virginia, June, 1867.