Your inquiries open the whole question of domestic slavery, which has in different forms for a number of years agitated Congress and the country.

Premising that you are the first person who has interrogated me on the subject, I give you the basis of what *would* be my reply in greater detail, if time allowed and the contingency alluded to above were less remote.

In boyhood, at William and Mary College, and in common with most, if not all, my companions, I became deeply impressed with the views given by Mr. Jefferson, in his "Notes on Virginia," and by Judge Tucker in the Appendix to his edition of Blackstone's Commentaries, in favour of a gradual emancipation of slaves. That Appendix I have not seen in thirty odd years, and, in the same period, have read scarcely any thing on the subject; but my early impressions are fresh and unchanged. Hence, if I had the honour of a seat in the Virginia Legislature in the winter of 1831-'2, when a bill was brought forward to carry out those views, I should certainly have given it my hearty support.

I suppose I scarcely need say that, in my opinion, Congress has no colour of authority, under the Constitution, for touching the relation of master and slave in a State.

I hold the opposite opinion in respect to the District of Columbia. Here, with the consent of the owners, or on the payment of "just compensation," Congress may legislate at its discretion. But my conviction is equally strong that, unless it be step by step with the Legislatures of Virginia and Maryland, it would be dangerous to both races in those States to touch the relation between master and slave in this District.

I have from the first been of opinion that Congress was bound by the Constitution to receive, to refer, and to report upon petitions relating to domestic slavery as in the case of all other petitions; but I have not failed to see and to regret the unavoidable irritation which the former have produced in the Southern States, with the consequent peril to the two colours, whereby the adoption of any plan of emancipation has every where among us been greatly retarded.

I own, myself, no slave; but never have attached blame to masters for not liberating their slaves—well knowing that liberation, without the means of sending them in comfort to some position favourable to "the pursuit of happiness," would, in most cases, be highly injurious to all around, as well as to the manumitted families themselves—unless the operation were general and under the auspices of prudent legislation. But I am persuaded that it is a high moral obligation of masters and slave-holding States to employ all means, not incompatible with the safety of both colours, to meliorate slavery to extermination.

It is gratifying to know that general melioration has been great, and is still progressive, notwithstang the disturbing causes alluded to above. The more direct process of emancipation may, no doubt, be earlier commenced and quickened in some communities than in others. Each, I do not question, has the right to judge for itself, both as to time and means, and I consider interference or aid from without, except on invitation from authority within, to be as hurtful to the sure progress of melioration, as it may be fatal to the lives of vast multitudes of all ages, sexes and colours. The work of liberation cannot be *forced* without such horrid results. Christian philanthropy is ever mild and considerate. Hence all violence ought to be deprecated by the friends of religion and humanity. Their persuasions cannot fail at the right time to free the master from the slave, and the slave from the master; perhaps before the latter shall have found out and acknowledged that the relation between the parties had long been mutually prejudicial to their wordly interests.

There is no evil without, in the order of Providence, some compensating benefit. The bleeding African was torn from his savage home by his ferocious neighbours, sold into slavery, and cast upon this continent. Here, in the mild South, the race has wonderfully multiplied, compared with any thing ever known in barbarous life. The descendants of a few thousands have become many millions; and all, from the first, made acquainted with the arts of civilization, and, above all, brought under the light of the Gospel.

From the promise made to Abraham, some 2,000 years elapsed before the advent of our Saviour, and the Israelites, the chosen people of God, were, for wise purposes, suffered to remain in bondage longer than Africans have been on our shores. This race has already experienced the resulting compensations alluded to; and as the white missionary has never been able to penetrate the dark regions of Africa, or to establish himself in its interior, it may be within the scheme of Providence that the great work of spreading the Gospel over that vast continent, with all the arts and comforts of civilization, is to be finally accomplished by the black man restored from American bondage. A foothold there has already been gained for him, and in such a scheme centuries are but as seconds to Him who moves worlds as man moves a finger.

I do but *suggest* the remedies and consolations of slavery, to inspire patience, hope, and charity on all sides. The mighty subject calls for the exercise of all man's wisdom and virtue, and these may not suffice without aid from a higher source.

It is in the foregoing manner, my dear sir, that I have long been in the habit, in conversation, of expressing myself, all over our common country, on the question of negro slavery, and I must say that I have found but very few persons to differ with me, however opposite their geographical positions.

Such are the views or opinions which you seek. I cannot suppress or mutilate them, although now liable to be more generally known. Do with them what you please. I neither court nor shun publicity.

I remain, very truly, yours,

WINFIELD SCOTT.

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MARYLAND

COLONIZATION JOURNAL.

CONDUCTED BY JAMES HALL, GENERAL AGENT OF THE MARYLAND STATE COLONIZATION SOCIETY.

New Series. BALTIMORE, MAY 15, 1843. Vol. 1.—No. 24.

"Nothing is more clearly written in the Book of Destiny, than the Emancipation of the Blacks; and it is equally certain that the two races will never live in a state of equal freedom under the same government, so insurmountable are the barriers which nature, habit and opinion have established between them." Jefferson.

LATEST FROM CAPE PALMAS.

ARRIVAL OF THE BARQUE GLOBE OUT AND HOME.

By the Globe we have received despatches from the colony as late as February 21st, by which we learn that every thing is moving on in the colony in the same old quiet fashion. Gov. Russwurm, under the above date, writes, "Since my last despatches by the Atalanta, nothing of interest has occurred to disturb the even tenor of our way. Your colonists are making themselves more comfortable every day. With the employment given by the Rev. J. Kelly of the Catholic mission, the Protestant Episcopal, the Methodist missions, and your agent, there has not been an idler in the colony, and consequently, no hungry ones. I am glad to receive among the passengers by the Globe, our old friends Cornish, Tubman and Bordley.

The coffee plants are doing well, and the success which has crowned Mr. D. Wilson's labours, encourages others to persevere. Our cotton at the public farm looks better than any I have yet seen. Our crop of corn also turned out better than that of any previous year: the seed was obtained from Cape Coast.

"We stand much in need of school books and stationery for the use of the schools and the agency. Besides our free school No. 1, we have a triweekly sewing school in operation. School No. 1, has averaged about 20 scholars the past year."

Some half dozen other letters were received from old colonists and the newly arrived emigrants. Those of the former have ceased to speak of satisfaction or dissatisfaction—they are generally on business, and of course uninteresting to our readers—but their tone is the best recommendation the colony can have. The new emigrants, as usual, are delighted at getting on shore in a free country after a long sea voyage. They express an abundance of thanks to the Colonization Society, and all that sort of thing. 'Tis amusing to look into some ill-directed letters which have been sent to this office, and which we have opened in order to find out where to send them. We concluded they must contain bank notes or something of the kind—but no. We find on opening, a scrap of an old dress pattern or shirting, indented so as to match some piece left with a dear friend behind them, which is to serve as a guarantee that the letter actually came from them, and was not

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

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